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ISAIAH
CHAPTERS I-XXXIX

EDITED BY
J. SKINNER, D.D.

GENERAL EDITOR
A.F. KIRKPATRICK, D.D.

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GENERAL EDITOR FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT:—

A. F. KIRKPATRICK, D.D.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH,

CHAPTERS I.—XXXIX.

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFACE

BY THE

GENERAL EDITOR FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT.

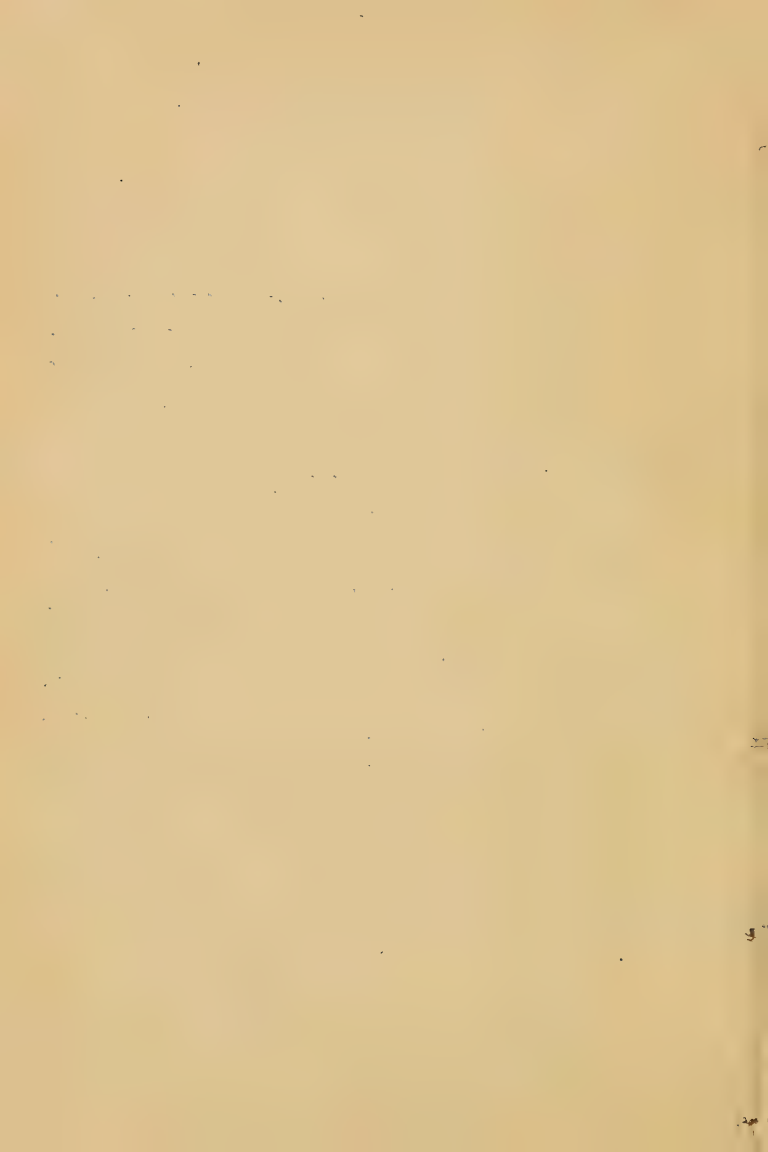
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CAMBRIDGE,

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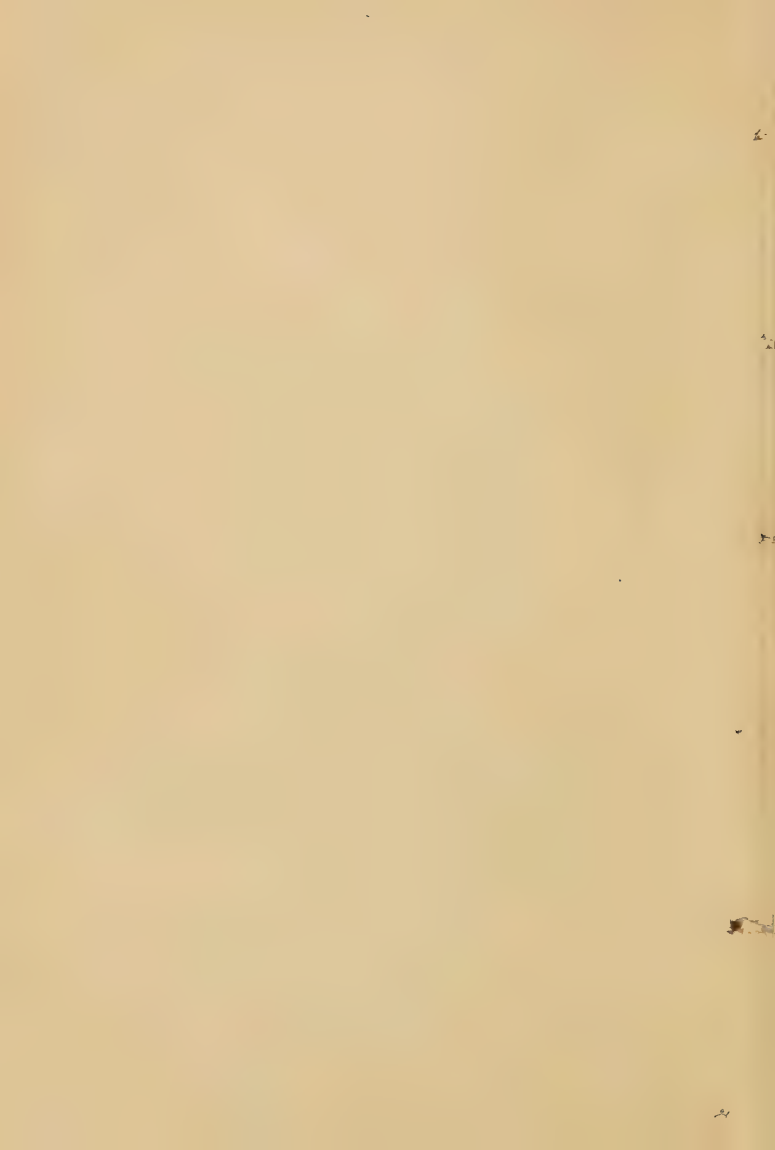
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* * * The Text adopted in this Edition is that of Dr Scrivener's *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. A few variations from the ordinary Text, chiefly in the spelling of certain words, and in the use of italics, will be noticed. For the principles adopted by Dr Scrivener as regards the printing of the Text see his Introduction to the *Paragraph Bible*, published by the Cambridge University Press.



GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

ISRAEL AND ASSYRIA IN THE TIME OF ISAIAH.

ISAIAH is the most distinguished of the remarkable group of prophets who enforced the lessons of the Assyrian crisis in the eighth century B.C. His public career, which covers the last 40 years of the century, was nearly co-extensive with the successive reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah; and during the greater part of that period he exercised a commanding political influence in Jerusalem. Of no other prophet can it be said with so much truth that his biography is the history of his time. In the case of his predecessors Amos and Hosea, or of his contemporary Micah, a general knowledge of the internal condition of the country and its foreign relations may suffice for the understanding of their writings; but for any profitable study of the work of Isaiah the indispensable preliminary is a somewhat minute acquaintance with the course of events both at home and abroad. It is all the more necessary that this should be briefly sketched here, because the biblical narrative has been so largely illustrated and supplemented from outside sources, especially through the decipherment of the Assyrian inscriptions.

The great political fact of the time was the westward extension of the Assyrian Empire. This commenced in earnest, after a pause of 40 years, with the accession of Tiglath-pileser III. in 745; and was thenceforward prosecuted by a succession of vigorous monarchs, till it reached its goal in the conquest of Egypt by Esarhaddon (672). It must have been

evident to thoughtful observers, even before Isaiah's entrance on public life, that the independent existence of all the smaller nations of Western Asia was endangered by the steady advance of this new and formidable power. Singly, they were helpless against the solid and disciplined might of Assyria; while at the same time they possessed too little stability of purpose to present a united front to the common enemy. The two Israelitish kingdoms, from their geographical position, ought to have been amongst the last to come into collision with the Assyrian power, and if they had been wise enough to keep aloof from political entanglements they would at least have secured a breathing space in which much might have been accomplished for the furtherance of those moral and religious interests which the prophets had at heart. The short-sighted policy of their rulers, however, involved them in premature and compromising relations with the Assyrian Empire; and in both cases with disastrous results.

Before we proceed to fill in the details of the narrative it is necessary to glance at the condition of the country at the opening of Isaiah's ministry.

THE AGE OF UZZIAH. The death of Uzziah (or Azariah)¹ after a successful reign of about 50 years, marks the close of a singularly brilliant chapter in the history of both North and South Israel. The crippling of Damascus in the Assyrian campaigns of 797 and 773 afforded to the kingdom of Samaria an opportunity of recovering from the long Syrian wars by which its strength had been exhausted. Under the strong rule of Jeroboam II. the bounds of the empire were extended almost to the utmost limits of David's conquests (2 Ki. xiv. 25; Am. vi. 14); and wealth no doubt began to flow in rapidly from the tribute of the subjugated states. Under Uzziah, Judah appears to have been nearly as prosperous. The conquest of Edom and the restoration of the Red Sea port of Elath (2 Ki. xiv. 22) secured the control of the caravan trade with Southern Arabia; and the revenue obtained from this source seems to have been

¹ On the date of his death, see Chronological Note, p. lxxv f.

wisely applied to develop the resources of the country and perfect its military efficiency (see 2 Chron. xxvi. 1—15). The result was that when Isaiah began his public work Judah had attained a degree of wealth, power and civilisation which must have placed it, along with Israel, in the front rank of the petty principalities that now separated Egypt from Assyria. "The land was full of silver and gold and there was no end of its treasures; the land was full of horses and there was no end of their chariots" (Is. ii. 7).

But this remarkable outburst of material prosperity was attended in both kingdoms by an aggravation of the social evils which seem inseparable from every oriental system of government. The influx of wealth appears to have accelerated certain economic changes, affecting large masses of the population, against which the prophets at all times loudly protested. The spread of debauchery and luxury amongst the upper classes (Is. iii. 16—23; v. 11, 12, 22; xxviii. 1—8; xxxii. 9 ff.) was a natural consequence of the increased means of enjoyment which came to these classes from the improved position of the country. But still greater evils followed from the accumulation of capital in the hands of a few. The rise of great landed estates (Is. v. 8; Mic. ii. 2, 9) meant the expropriation of the old peasant proprietors, who had been the strength of the state, and the creation of a destitute and landless lower class. And if anything were wanting to enhance the indignation of the prophets at this glaring contrast between the extremes of poverty and luxury, it was found in the methods by which it was brought about. The eviction of the smaller land owners was largely effected by systematic abuses of the forms of justice, corrupt judges favouring the suit of the rich man against the poor, in return for a share of the spoils (Is. i. 23; iii. 14, 15; v. 23; x. 1, 2; xxix. 21). Hence the writings of the prophets abound in denunciations of the injustice and oppression, the avarice and licentiousness which prevailed in the higher ranks of society at this time (see also Is. i. 17; v. 7). And although it may be true that these were permanent features in the life of the Hebrew commonwealth, and would have attracted the attention of the prophets in any period, it

cannot be doubted that they were all greatly aggravated by the peculiar social conditions of the age of Uzziah.

In these evidences of national declension and disorder the prophets of the time read the sure premonition of a terrible day of judgment. But their anxiety was not shared by the governing classes either in Samaria or Jerusalem. In both capitals a spirit of optimism and careless security prevailed in political circles (Am. vi. 1, 13). The strange lull in the conquering career of Assyria which preceded the accession of Tiglath-pileser appears to have fostered the delusion that all danger from that quarter had passed away. About the time when Isaiah appears on the scene, however, events took place which ought to have effectually dispelled that notion. The capture of Arpad (*circa* 740), and Hamath (738), and the intervention of Pul (Tiglath-pileser) in the reign of Menahem (2 Ki. xv. 19) brought the danger close to the doors of North Israel. If it be the case, as is held by some Assyriologists, that Uzziah himself, shortly before his death, suffered a defeat at the hands of Tiglath-pileser¹, the lesson cannot have been altogether lost upon Judah. But no trace of such a disaster is found in the Old Testament; nor do the earliest writings of Isaiah suggest that there was any general uneasiness with regard to the immediate prospects of the country.

THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITIC WAR (*c.* 735). Perhaps the event which first roused the politicians of Jerusalem from their dream of security was an indirect consequence of the forward movement of Assyria. In 735, shortly after Ahaz ascended the throne, a combined attack on Judah was planned by Rezin and Pekah the kings of Syria and Ephraim. The war, indeed, seems to

¹ In two passages of the annals of Tiglath-pileser, referring apparently to the year 739 or 738, an Azria'u of Ja-udi is mentioned as the leading member of a strong coalition formed for the defence of Hamath. The question that divides Assyriologists is of course whether this prince is identical with Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah, or whether he was the otherwise unknown ruler of a kingdom in North Syria, which is alluded to in other inscriptions. If the former view be correct it can hardly mean less than that Judah was the foremost military power in Western Asia at the time. The arguments on both sides are succinctly given by McCurdy, *History Prophecy and the Monuments*, pp. 413 f.

have commenced before the death of Jotham¹ (2 Ki. xv. 37); but it is clear from Is. vii. 1, 2 that some fresh and startling development followed the accession of Ahaz, causing the utmost consternation in Jerusalem. From all we know of the character of Ahaz he was a man little fitted to cope with a crisis of this magnitude. In his panic-stricken imagination, the immediate peril overrode all considerations of national honour and political prudence, and he resolved to throw himself on the protection of the king of Assyria. This decision has been defended by some modern historians, as that which would have recommended itself to any statesman in similar circumstances. It is safer to trust the unerring political sagacity of Isaiah, in whose judgment Ahaz at this juncture played the part of a craven. A calmer view of the situation would have convinced the king that the danger was not so great as to justify what was on the face of it a counsel of despair. Nor is it clear that he gained any substantial advantage in return for his tribute and his offer of submission. For although Tiglath-pileser promptly responded to his appeal by ravaging the Northern and Eastern districts of Israel (2 Ki. xv. 29)², this was probably no more than he would have done of his own initiative. He was not likely to permit his feudatories to carry on wars of conquest on their own account, and if Ahaz had but shared the courage and faith of Isaiah, deliverance would have come without the degrading and dangerous conditions implied by the Assyrian suzerainty. (See Introductory Note on ch. vii., p. 49 f.)

THE FALL OF SAMARIA (*c.* 721). Judah had thus, by the deliberate act of her sovereign, passed under the hard yoke of the king of Assyria. It was long, however, before the evil consequences of this fatal step became fully apparent. Ahaz appears to have remained steadfast in his allegiance to Tiglath-pileser, and he

¹ Whose independent reign, however, must have been very short. See Chronological Note.

² The Assyrian monuments shew that this expedition took place in 734; and this fixes approximately the date of the Syro-Ephraimitic war. The chastisement of Damascus (2 Ki. xvi. 9) took place about two years later.

died (probably in 727¹) bequeathing the legacy of political servitude and a galling tribute to his son and successor Hezekiah. In 727 Tiglath-pileser was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV. The change of sovereign was the signal for a revolt of several of the recently subjugated provinces in the West, where Egyptian intrigue was now busily fomenting disaffection towards the Assyrian government. There is no evidence that Hezekiah was involved in any treasonable negotiations at this time, although we may be certain that great pressure would be brought to bear on him to join the conspiracy. In Samaria, however, the efforts of the Egyptian party were successful. Hoshea, the last king, opened communications with Sevé² of Egypt, and renounced his allegiance to Assyria by withholding the annual tribute. When Shalmaneser advanced against him he seems to have surrendered, but his subjects prepared to defend the capital to the last. After a siege of three years Samaria was captured about 721; and the kingdom of the Ten Tribes was finally incorporated in the Assyrian Empire (2 Ki. xvii. 3—6).

EVENTS IN THE REIGN OF SARGON (722—705). The siege of Samaria, begun by Shalmaneser, was brought to a conclusion under Sargon, who succeeded to the throne in 722. In the first years of his reign, whilst he was occupied with the affairs of Babylon, the still smouldering insurrection in Palestine suddenly assumed such formidable dimensions as to threaten the loss of nearly the whole territory annexed by Tiglath-pileser. But in the year 720 Sargon himself marched westwards, and so effectually crushed all opposition that for nearly ten years he seems to have had no more trouble in that region. He penetrated as far south as Gaza and terminated a successful campaign by defeating the allied Philistine and Egyptian troops in the battle of Raphia, near that city. The event is memorable as the first armed collision of the rival powers of Egypt and Assyria.

¹ On this disputed date, see again the Chronological Note, p. lxxvi f.

² In the Hebrew text pointed so as to read Sô; in Assyrian *Sab'ê*, or *Sib'i*. He is frequently identified with the Ethiopian king Sabako, supposed at this time to be the over-lord of Egypt. The identification is questioned by some, who take Sab'é to be one of the kings who ruled in Lower Egypt.

Throughout these troubles Judah had maintained an attitude of wise neutrality which is probably in part at least to be attributed to Isaiah's influence with the court. The first definite indication of the growing restiveness of Judah occurs in an inscription of Sargon relating to the year 711. He speaks of "[the inhabitants] of Philistia, Judah, Edom and Moab who...had to bring tribute and presents to Asshur, my lord" but who now "mediated hostilities and plotted evil, who...sent their tokens of homage to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, a prince who could not save them, and sought an alliance with him¹." The focus of the conspiracy on this occasion seems to have been the Philistine city of Ashdod, against which Sargon despatched an expedition under the Tartan or commander-in-chief (Is. xx. 1). With the capture of that city the insurrection collapsed. Hezekiah appears to have withdrawn from the league in time to escape the vengeance of Sargon. The hypothesis of an Assyrian invasion of Judah at this date, at one time adopted by some high authorities as throwing light on certain important prophecies of Isaiah, has never commanded general acceptance, and is now practically abandoned².

SENNACHERIB'S INVASION (701). We now come to the last and most eventful period of Isaiah's long ministry. The early years of Sennacherib's reign (from 705) seemed to the advisers of Hezekiah a favourable opportunity for a determined effort

¹ The embassy of Merodach-baladan (Is. xxxix.) probably belongs to this period (c. 713).

² Cheyne, who held this view in 1889, has now pronounced against it. The campaign against Ashdod is fully narrated in an inscription of Sargon, who of course takes the whole credit of it to himself, and writes as if he had commanded the army in person. If an invasion of Judah had taken place at this time the silence of the inscription with regard to it would be inexplicable. There is indeed another inscription of Sargon's, in which he speaks of himself as "the subduer of the land of Judah, whose situation is far distant," and this has sometimes been appealed to in confirmation of the theory under discussion. But the tablet on which these words occur is now held to be the earliest of all the extant records of Sargon's reign, and is assigned by Winckler to the year 717. Whatever, therefore, may be the exact meaning of that expression, it certainly cannot be adduced as evidence of an expedition against Judah in the year 711.

to shake off the supremacy of Assyria. In the year following the accession of Sennacherib, a new monarch succeeded to the crown of the Ethiopian kingdom of Napata. This was the able and enterprising Tirhakah (Egyptian, *Taharqa*; Assyrian, *Tarqu*), who ultimately asserted his sway over the whole of the Nile-valley; and vigorously adopted the policy of check-mating Assyria by stirring up disaffection amongst the Assyrian vassal states in Palestine. At the same time Sennacherib had a formidable opponent in Babylon, in the person of the Chaldaean rebel Merodach-baladan, who had already for twelve years defied the power of Sargon, and had been subdued only with great difficulty. Sennacherib was hardly seated on the throne when this doughty champion of Babylonian independence reappeared on the scene, and eventually (before 702) succeeded in establishing himself once more as king of Babylon. It has been very generally supposed that it was at this time that Merodach-baladan sent his embassy to Hezekiah soliciting his cooperation against the king of Assyria. Although this view seems less probable than that which assigns the event to the reign of Sargon (see p. xv), it is certain that the revolt of Babylon seriously embarrassed Sennacherib, and had an important influence on the course of events in Palestine. There is little doubt, at all events, that the Ethiopian embassy, mentioned in ch. xviii., was sent by Tirhakah, and falls within this period (between 704 and 701). The temptation proved irresistible. Hezekiah's scruples were overcome, Isaiah's remonstrances being overborne by the influence of the Egyptian party in the court, and Judah was definitely committed to rebellion by the conclusion of a treaty with Egypt¹.

¹ A difficult point emerges here on account of our uncertainty as to the precise relations between Tirhakah and Egypt at this time. The question is whether Tirhakah as yet possessed the effective suzerainty over Egypt which he ultimately attained, or whether the kings of Egypt still acted with a certain measure of independence in matters of foreign policy. On the former alternative the alliance with Egypt referred to in ch. xxviii.—xxxi. was really an alliance with Tirhakah, and stands in the closest connexion with the incident of ch. xviii. But if the latter be correct, the negotiations with Egypt may have been quite independent of the overtures of Tirhakah. The view followed in this volume

Having once taken the irrevocable step, Hezekiah seems to have acted with great spirit and energy. His chief care was naturally bestowed on the defence of his capital, and we learn from Sennacherib's inscriptions that with this object he strengthened the garrison of Jerusalem by enlisting a force of Arabs and other mercenaries. A further indication of the leading part he played in the confederacy is furnished by the fact that Padi, the Assyrian vassal-king of Ekron, having been dethroned and imprisoned by his subjects, was sent to Jerusalem for safe custody. The dangerous pre-eminence thus accorded to Judah by the revolted states made a reconciliation with Assyria impossible; and thus while other kings (as those of Ammon, Moab and Edom) escaped by tendering their submission, Hezekiah had to bear the brunt of Sennacherib's vengeance.

It was not till his third campaign that Sennacherib, having previously "accomplished the destruction of Merodach-baladan," was able to turn his attention to the state of affairs in the West. The incidents of that famous expedition are recorded with great fulness of detail in no fewer than three practically identical inscriptions of Sennacherib, the best known of which (the so-called "Taylor-Prism") is translated in the *Records of the Past* (New Series, vol. VI. pp. 80 ff.). In these official narratives the campaign is divided into four stages: (1) the subjugation of the Phœnician cities, (2) the chastisement of Tsidqa, king of Ashkelon, (3) the operations against Ekron, and (4) the invasion of Judah. The first two of these may here be passed over as not immediately bearing on our subject. The people of Ekron, as we have already seen, had deposed their king Padi, and sent him in chains to Hezekiah. At the approach of the Assyrian king they "feared in their hearts"; but before Sennacherib could proceed to the siege of the city he had to encounter "a force without number" of Egyptians and Arabs which was marching

is that ch. xxviii.—xxx. refers to intrigues with the petty princes of the Delta, that it was these kings whom Sennacherib defeated at Eltekeh (see p. xviii), and that the rumour of Tirhakah's advance (ch. xxxvii. 9) warned Sennacherib of a conflict with a far more formidable enemy than any he had yet encountered. The *precise* date of the Ethiopian embassy must therefore remain a matter of uncertainty.

to the relief of Ekron. The engagement took place at Eltekeh (Josh. xix. 44; xxi. 23); and although Sennacherib claims a decisive victory, it has been pointed out that the record omits the elaborate enumeration of the spoils which usually adorns the accounts of really important victories of Assyrian kings. The Egyptians, however, failed in their main object; Ekron was speedily reduced, and stern punishment was meted out to the ringleaders of the rebellion. In order to complete what he has to say about Ekron the annalist here relates the surrender of Padi by Hezekiah, and his restoration to the throne; but this no doubt slightly anticipates the actual course of events. Next follows the account of the operations against Judah, which may best be given in Sennacherib's own words. "But Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged 46 of his strong cities, fortresses, and small cities of their environs without number, (and) by casting down their walls (?).....I took them. 200,150 men, young (and) old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep without number I brought out from them, I counted them as spoil. Himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem his royal city; the walls I fortified against him (and) whosoever came out of the gates of the city I turned back. His cities, which I had plundered, I divided from his land and gave them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, to Padi, king of Ekron, and to Tsil-bal, king of Gaza, and (thus) diminished his territory. To the former tribute, paid yearly, I added the tribute of alliance of my lordship and laid that upon him. Hezekiah himself was overwhelmed by the fear of the brightness of my lordship; the Arabians and his other faithful warriors whom as a defence for Jerusalem his royal city he had brought in, fell into fear. With 30 talents of gold (and) 800 talents of silver, precious stones.....a heavy treasure and his daughters, his women of the palace, his young men and young women, to Nineveh the city of my lordship, I caused to be brought after me, and he sent his ambassadors to give tribute and to pay homage¹."

¹ *Rec. of the Past*, Vol. VI. pp. 90 f. For other translations see Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Test.* (Engl. Transl.

We must now compare this circumstantial and undoubtedly, in the main, reliable narrative with the corresponding account in 2 Ki. xviii. 13—xix. 37 (cf. Is. xxxvi., xxxvii.). We are at once struck by their remarkable agreement with regard to certain leading features of the campaign. Both relate (1) the capture of the "fenced cities" of Judah, (2) the investment of Jerusalem by an Assyrian army, (3) the submission of Hezekiah and the exaction of a heavy tribute; and another important point of correspondence is (4) that Sennacherib himself does not claim to have effected the reduction of Jerusalem. But there is one essential difference between the two records: whereas Sennacherib represents Hezekiah's surrender as the consequence of the siege of Jerusalem, the Hebrew historian places it before the assault on the capital. It is obviously of the utmost importance for the understanding of Isaiah's work that a satisfactory solution of this discrepancy should be obtained, and a number of widely diverging theories have been propounded with that object. One suggestion is that Sennacherib has purposely falsified the sequence of events in order to give the appearance of success to what was really an abortive attack on Jerusalem¹. Other critics have supposed that the biblical narrative combines the accounts of two entirely different Assyrian invasions of Judah, one in 701 and another near the close of Sennacherib's reign². But of this second campaign no independent evidence whatever has been discovered. The most reasonable supposition after all is that Sennacherib's narrative simply breaks off before reaching the last and most unfortunate stage of the campaign, in other words that the Old Testament parallel to the Assyrian account is found in 2 Ki. xviii. 13—16, while the subsequent narrative of vv. 17 ff. refers to events passed over in

Vol. I. pp. 280 ff.), and *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Vol. II. pp. 95—97.

¹ So Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscr.* Vol. I. p. 301.

² This theory seems to have been first started by the two Rawlinsons. See G. Rawlinson, *Five Great Monarchies*, Vol. II. p. 165 (2nd Ed.). In a modified form it is still upheld by Winckler (*Geschichte Bab. u. Assyrr.* p. 254). A similar view, once prevalent, was that 2 Kings xviii. 13 (14)—16 refers to Sargon's supposed campaign in 711 and what follows to Sennacherib's in 701.

silence by the inscription. There is no improbability in the assumption that Jerusalem was twice blockaded in the course of the war, provided a sufficient motive can be assigned for a renewal of hostilities on the part of Sennacherib. Such a motive is readily enough suggested by the situation in which the Assyrian king found himself towards the close of this campaign; and in this way we are led to a conception of the progress of events which, if not altogether free from difficulty, has commended itself to many of the best critics as affording the most satisfactory solution of a somewhat intricate problem.

We must assume, then, that after the terms of capitulation had been arranged and after the first siege of Jerusalem had been raised, Sennacherib saw reason to change his mind, and to insist on the absolute surrender of the capital. His position at the end of an arduous campaign, and in front of an enemy who might at any time be reinforced from Ethiopia, was becoming daily more critical, and he probably realised that it would be a strategical blunder of the worst kind to leave an important fortress like Jerusalem in the hands of so doubtful a vassal as Hezekiah. It is possible also that Hezekiah, encouraged by the rumour of Tirhakah's advance, may have been indiscreet enough to exhibit some indication of a hostile disposition. At all events, the steps now taken by Sennacherib reveal at once his eagerness to obtain possession of Jerusalem, and his inability to direct the whole force of his army against it. We are told, indeed, that he sent from Lachish, "a great host" with the Rabshakeh and other officers to demand the surrender of Jerusalem; but it is evident that the display of force was merely a stratagem, and that the Great King relied mainly on the eloquent tongue of his chief minister. The object of the mission, in fact, was in the first instance to intimidate Hezekiah by threats, and failing that to induce the people to rise up against him. But Hezekiah, now acting under Isaiah's advice, declined to enter into fresh negotiations, and the officers retired baffled to Lachish. A second attempt¹ to play on the fears

¹ Unless, indeed, we have here two parallel accounts of a single occurrence. See Introductory Note on ch. xxxvi. f.

of Hezekiah by means of a royal letter met with no better success, and Sennacherib was obliged to proceed southwards, leaving Jerusalem still un-reduced in his rear.

The state of matters within the walls of Jerusalem during this crisis will fall to be more fully considered in the next chapter. Here it is enough to say that the resolute attitude of the king was due solely to the lofty faith and courage of Isaiah and his confident and reiterated predictions that the Assyrian should not be permitted to inflict the smallest injury on Jerusalem (ch. xxxvii. 6, 7; 21—35). These anticipations were more than realised, when in a single night "the angel of the Lord...smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand" (xxxvii. 36), and Sennacherib was compelled to return to his own land¹. The political consequences of this mysterious calamity, as read in the light of our fuller knowledge of Assyrian history, may seem meagre and disappointing. It is now known that Sennacherib survived the catastrophe for 20 years and during that time waged many successful wars. It is certain also that the deliverance did not permanently affect the relations of Judah to the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian monarchs still exacted their yearly tribute from the kings of Jerusalem and treated them as their subjects. On the other hand it may well be doubted whether Sennacherib was able to enforce the hard conditions which he imposed on Hezekiah at the time of his submission². The very fact that during the 20 remaining years of his reign he never again appeared in Palestine, or renewed the attack on Egypt, is sufficient proof that his policy was permanently altered by the serious disaster which there befel him. But if we measure the crisis by the spiritual interests that were at stake we shall find that it possesses an importance that cannot be over-estimated. Whatever may be uncertain, it is certain that the political existence of Judah was then saved from seemingly inevitable extinction. If Sennacherib had attained his object the people would have been led into captivity (see ch. xxxvi. 17). Israel would have perished as a nation, and with it the hopes on which the religious future of humanity depended would have

¹ See further on ch. xxxvii. 36.

² See above, p. xviii.

been lost. That this result was averted was due to the inspiration which guided Isaiah throughout his life and to the providential interposition which crowned his prophecies with their fulfilment. The events of 701 form, therefore, a fitting close to the public career of the great prophet, who from this time vanishes from the stage of history.

CHAPTER II.

THE LIFE AND PROPHETIC ACTIVITY OF ISAIAH.

OF Isaiah's private life very few details can be gathered from his writings. We know that he grew up to manhood under the brilliant reign of Uzziah, and he must have been still a young man, though probably married, when in the year of that king's death he received his call to the prophetic office. His name, in Hebrew *Yēsha'yāhū* ("salvation of Jehovah") appears not to have been an uncommon one in Israel (1 Chr. xxv. 3, 15; xxvi. 25; iii. 21; Ezra viii. 7, 19; Neh. xi. 7), and although to the prophet himself it had a symbolic significance as embodying a cardinal principle of his ministry (ch. viii. 18), it throws no light on the circumstances of his birth or the religious disposition of his parents. Of his father Amoz nothing further is known. The fancied resemblance of his name to that of the prophet Amos does not exist in the original, and the notion that the younger prophet was the son of the older was only the speculation of some Greek, ignorant of Hebrew orthography. Equally worthless is the Jewish tradition which makes Amoz a brother of king Amaziah, and Isaiah consequently a member of the royal house of Judah. From the fact, however, that Isaiah was intimately acquainted with the ways of the court and had at all times ready access to the presence of the king, as well as from a certain aristocratic loftiness of thought which appears in his writings, we may probably conclude that he belonged to a good family and had enjoyed all the advantages of education and social intercourse that were

open to the son of a prominent citizen of Jerusalem. Of the religious influences that moulded his youthful character little can be said. It is possible that a great earthquake in the days of Uzziah (Am. i. 1; Zech. xiv. 5) may have left an ineffaceable impression on his mind and furnished the imagery for his first and most powerful delineation of the great day of Jehovah (ch. ii. 12 ff.). But Isaiah was not left to interpret the signs of the times by his own unaided reflections. He had "a more sure word of prophecy" in the teaching of his own immediate predecessors Amos and Hosea. Two years before the earthquake Amos had appeared at Bethel with a message of doom which sent a momentary thrill of terror through the whole northern kingdom (Am. vii. 10). His work in North Israel was continued by Hosea, whose career preceded that of Isaiah by a very short interval. The influence of both these prophets can be clearly traced in the earlier discourses of Isaiah, and it is reasonable to suppose that before his own call his mind was thus imbued with those great prophetic principles to which he was destined to give such forcible expression.

It was amidst the forebodings naturally suggested by the death of Uzziah that Isaiah became conscious of his prophetic vocation. The statement that he first saw the Lord "in the year that king Uzziah died" has doubtless something more than a mere chronological interest. The aged monarch, who had so well upheld the credit of the State, was either just dead or else in the last stages of leprosy. The recent history of the kingdom of Samaria furnished an ominous warning of the troubles that might follow the removal of a capable ruler at such a time; and it may be that Isaiah had a presentiment that the death of this king would be the prelude to a period of anarchy and confusion such as he afterwards pictured as a feature of the divine judgment on Israel's sin (ch. iii. 1 ff.). The significance of the vision of ch. vi. becomes at least somewhat more intelligible to our minds if we regard it as the answer to apprehensions such as these. At a time when his thoughts were occupied with the decease of a sovereign whom he had learned to revere as the embodiment of wise and experienced statesmanship, there was

granted to Isaiah a revelation of Him who was the true divine King of Israel; and at the same time he gained a perception of the ultimate issues of Jehovah's dealings with the nation which enabled him to face the dark and threatening future with confidence and hope.

The spiritual truths impressed on the prophet's mind by this memorable experience are those which we shall see unfolded with singular clearness and constancy of purpose throughout his whole subsequent ministry. An exposition of these truths in their connexion will be attempted in a subsequent chapter, but it is necessary here to specify certain elements of the vision whose influence appears at all stages of Isaiah's career. Of these the first and most fundamental is an overwhelming sense of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah, the God of Israel. These aspects of the divine nature are prominent in nearly every page of his writings, and the prophet's sense of them is undoubtedly to be traced to that supreme moment of his spiritual history when his eyes saw the King, Jehovah of Hosts, and he shrank in terror from the contact of his holiness (ch. vi. 5). In the second place, Isaiah was then possessed by the consciousness of a life-long mission to be discharged in the service of the divine King as His messenger and spokesman to Israel. The alacrity with which he offers himself for this work, without knowing what it might involve, is a revelation of the ardent temperament of the man and contrasts strikingly with the hesitation displayed by another great prophet at a similar moment of his life (ch. vi. 8; cf. Jer. i. 6). But Isaiah further learned something of the nature and effects of the work to which he was thus consecrated. It is a gloomy and discouraging prospect that is disclosed to him,—a people so hardened in unbelief that the very abundance of his revelations and the urgency of his appeals will only render them more and more insensible to spiritual influences, while step by step the inevitable judgment is executed upon them until the existing nation of Israel has been utterly consumed (ch. vi. 9—13). And finally the vision contains a ray of hope in the promise of an indestructible remnant in Israel, a "holy seed" or spiritual kernel of the nation, which

shall survive the judgment and become the germ of the ideal people of God (*v.* 13). This last idea of the "Remnant," which is one of the most distinctive in Isaiah's teaching, was perhaps also the first to receive public expression; for it is embodied in the name of a son, *Shĕār-Ĵāshûb* (= "Remnant shall turn,") who must have been born to the prophet very soon after his inaugural vision (see *ch.* vii. 3). The application of that and other principles in different situations will appear as we proceed to describe the various aspects of Isaiah's public work.

It is convenient to distinguish three periods of Isaiah's ministry, which, although very unequal in length, are marked each by some features peculiar to itself. i. The first period extends from the death of Uzziah to the beginning of the reign of Ahaz. ii. The second is the critical period of the Syro-Ephraimitic invasion, about 735. iii. The third is the time of the Assyrian domination, culminating in the invasion and deliverance of the year 701¹.

i. The discourses commonly assigned to the first period are found in *chs.* ii.—iv., v. 1—24, ix. 8—x. 4 + v. 25—30. If to these passages we add *ch.* i. (which, although certainly not written *before* the Syro-Ephraimitic war, may not improbably be assigned to that date, and may then be regarded as a final manifesto summing up the results of the first period of his work) we have a well-defined group of prophecies, with a general resemblance to the book of Amos and presenting a vivid picture of the earliest phase of Isaiah's ministry. Like Amos, the prophet appears here mainly as a preacher of national righteousness and of judgment to come. The two great themes which are the burden of his message are the sin of Israel and the certainty of national disaster through the agency of the Assyrians. It has been disputed which of these two intuitions was primary and which was secondary in the consciousness of the prophets; that is to say, whether it was their profound sense of national sin that led them to the conviction that a great judgment was inevitable, or whether their intuitive certainty of what was portended by the approach of Assyria opened their

¹ Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 214, 422 (2nd Ed.).

eyes to the evidences of national corruption around them. The question, so formulated, hardly admits of an answer. What is peculiar to the prophets is the idea of God and of the moral order of the universe which enabled them to see the connexion between two sets of facts which to the prevalent religion of the time stood in no relation to one another. Knowing Jehovah as the absolutely Righteous One and the omnipotent Disposer of events they recognised His voice of anger in the thundering march of the Assyrians, and what they heard confirmed the verdict of their conscience on the moral condition of their people. In this respect Isaiah simply represents the attitude common to the prophets of the Assyrian period, and the two lines of thought which have been indicated are developed with equal power and earnestness in his earliest writings.

We have already seen that the social state of Judah was very similar to that of North Israel in the days of Amos, and Isaiah deals with the evils of the age in the spirit of his predecessor. If we may trust a probable arrangement of the discourses his criticism becomes more incisive and discriminating as time goes on. At first (in ch. ii.) his attention is directed to the outstanding evidences of ungodliness and worldly pride in the still prosperous country of Judah. Idolatry, superstition, trust in wealth and warlike resources—these familiar features of the nation's life are to the vision of the prophet purified by contact with the Holy One of Israel, so many symptoms of the irreligious spirit of his contemporaries. Somewhat later (ch. iii.) he touches on social evils, the oppression and injustice practised by the rich and powerful on the poor (*vv.* 9, 14, 15), and the luxurious fashions of the women of Jerusalem (*vv.* 16 ff.). In a still later prophecy (ch. v. 8—24) he comes to close quarters with the sins of action and of thought characteristic of the upper class, denouncing in a series of "woes" their violations of the rights of property in the lawless extension of landed estates (8—10), their drinking festivities (11, 12, 22), their unjust judgments (23), and (coming to more spiritual sins) their heedlessness of Jehovah's working (12), mocking and defiant scepticism (19), and perversion of moral distinctions (20). In ch. i. we find an additional

echo of Amos in the exposure of the prevalent delusion that Jehovah could be propitiated by costly and elaborate ritual service without regard to the character and conduct of the worshippers (*v. 10—17*). The corrective to this religious error is given in the parable of the vineyard (*ch. v. 1—7*, cf. *iii. 14*), which expresses the fundamental prophetic doctrine that Jehovah “looks for judgment...and righteousness” in the nation which He has chosen for His own. There is perhaps one respect in which Isaiah’s treatment of national sins is more profound than that of Amos: he appears to trace all the manifestations of national corruption to a single source in the absence of a religious spirit, or the knowledge of God, in the men of his time. Here again we can perceive the influence of the vivid impression of the glory of God which he himself experienced at the moment of his call.

The descriptions of the coming judgment that occur in this cycle of prophecies exhibit all the qualities of Isaiah’s powerful and versatile genius. His very earliest recorded utterance contains a sublime vision of the “day of Jehovah,” as a day of earthquake and thunder, when “all that is proud and lofty” in nature or human civilisation shall be humbled before the glory of Jehovah’s majesty (*ch. ii. 12 ff.*). Again he pictures Jehovah as appearing in person to judge the rulers of his people (*iii. 14*), or he sees Him standing with outstretched hand to smite the sinful kingdom of the North (*ix. 12, 17 etc.*). But Isaiah’s strong sense of historic reality leads him to throw out more realistic descriptions of the judgment than these. Thus in *ch. iii. 1—7* he conceives it as taking the shape of a period of revolutionary anarchy in the Judæan state, such as he had already witnessed in Ephraim (*ix. 14 ff.*). And although he does not yet mention the Assyrians by name, it is plain from *v. 26—30* that he has them in view as the human instruments of Jehovah’s vengeance on Israel.

The eschatological element of Isaiah’s teaching, however, is as yet simple and undeveloped, although clearly present. He looks for a purification of the state from its base and worthless elements and a restoration of the best times of the old monarchy

(i. 24—26). The doctrine of the remnant is referred to in i. 27, as well as in the name of the prophet's son Shear-Jashub. Of the ideal age beyond the judgment we have two pictures in ii. 2—4 and iv. 2—6, although it is not quite certain that either of these passages belongs to Isaiah's spoken message of this period.

ii. (See chs. xvii. I—II, vii., viii.; perhaps also ix. 1—7.) The second phase of Isaiah's ministry exhibits him in an entirely new character, that, namely, of a political adviser. In order to appreciate the importance of this fact we have only to look at the contrast which in this respect he presents to Amos and Hosea in the North. These prophets held the same fundamental convictions as Isaiah; they looked forward to a blessed future for Israel after the work of judgment was completed; yet their writings contain no hint of political direction for the leaders of the state. They take up a negative attitude towards the problems of statesmanship; and it must have seemed that the breach between Jehovah and His people was so absolute that no guidance or counsel could be obtained through the medium of the prophetic word. Now it is one of Isaiah's chief distinctions that he revived this political function of prophecy which had been in abeyance since the time of Elisha. Without descending from the high spiritual level to which prophecy had been raised by the work of Amos and Hosea, he was able from that standpoint to formulate a definite religious policy by which the nation might be safely guided through the dangers that lay immediately before it.

The fundamental maxims of Isaiah's statesmanship come first to light in the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitic invasion, in the memorable interview with Ahaz, recorded in ch. vii. The prophet had already announced (in ch. xvii. I—II) the issue of the ill-fated alliance between Syria and Ephraim. By its unbrotherly attack on Judah (see ch. ix. 21) the Northern Kingdom had but sealed its own doom; and both it and Syria must speedily fall a prey to the advancing Assyrians. He knew also that a brief respite would be granted to Judah; and it was with the view of securing that this interval should be taken advantage

of in the highest interests of the nation that he sought, under divine direction, a personal meeting with the king. His main concern was to dissuade Ahaz from seeking to save himself from a passing danger by placing himself under the protection of Assyria. He represented the trivial nature of the momentary peril; and urged the king with all the weight of his inspired authority to adopt an attitude of wise passivity, renouncing all trust in earthly help and dubious political expedients, and relying on Jehovah alone to bring a good result out of the present crisis. How eager he was to bring the king round to a right mind he shewed by the offer of a miraculous sign in confirmation of his right to speak in the name of Jehovah. But it was all in vain. Ahaz had probably already taken his own line, and he refused to be turned aside by the fervid appeal of the prophet.

Isaiah, however, did not accept the decision of Ahaz as the final response of the nation to his message. From the court he appealed to the people at large, in the series of oracles contained in ch. viii., extending probably over a period of many months. By two symbolic acts he endeavoured to fix indelibly in the public mind the central fact on which his reading of the political situation hinged, viz., the speedy destruction of Syria and Ephraim by the king of Assyria. For this purpose he first caused a placard to be affixed, with legal formalities, in a conspicuous position, bearing the inscription "To Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (viii. 1, 2). Then some months afterwards he gave the interpretation of the motto, in connexion with the birth of a son, in whose name, as his manner was, he embodied the idea which at the time was of paramount importance in his work. "For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria" (vv. 3, 4). But neither amongst the people did he find any general acceptance of his message. On every hand he was confronted by evidences of religious insensibility and confirmed unbelief. It was his first experience on a large scale of the truth revealed to him in his inaugural vision, that the effect of

his mission would be to produce judicial blindness and hardness of heart in those whom he addressed. The prophet recognised that his generation had passed through a spiritual ordeal from which it emerged with a gloomier destiny and a more certain looking for of judgment than under better auspices might have awaited it. It would seem that as he stood there before the unworthy representative of the house of David, thrown back on the inward inspiration which guided him, the prophet saw the whole vista of the future suddenly unfolded before his vision in darker colours, but in clearer outline than it had ever yet assumed. The sign which Ahaz did not dare to ask would be given in spite of his refusal (vii. 14); a child should be born whose name, Immanuel, "God with us," should be the earnest of deliverance from the attack of the allied kings (v. 16). But this happy event does not now close the outlook. Beyond that deliverance stretches the dreary prospect of a land ravaged by Assyrian and Egyptian armies, of the cessation of agriculture for an indefinite period, and a poor and scanty population reduced to the bare necessities of life (vii. 18—25; cf. viii. 7, 8). In this time of distress the child Immanuel is to grow up, sharing the poverty and humiliation of his people (vii. 15); and the full significance of his name will only be revealed in that glorious future which here, as always, forms the limit of Isaiah's prophetic horizon (ix. 1—7. See below, p. lviii f.).

Such appear to be the main outlines of the forecast of coming events which Isaiah published at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war. That it was remarkably verified in the subsequent history of Judah is familiar to all readers of the Old Testament. It is true that the picture contains some minor features which were not exactly fulfilled. Probably none of the events foretold took place quite so soon as Isaiah had anticipated. The overthrow of Damascus took place in 732, that of Samaria ten years later. So again the Assyrian invasion of Judah did not happen within at most 10 or 12 years, as Isaiah appears to have expected, but was postponed for more than a generation. The land of Judah was not the theatre of the contest between Egypt and Assyria for the mastery of Asia, as is assumed in vii. 18, 19.

But these are matters of detail which do not affect the substantial truth of the prediction, and they are modified in later utterances of Isaiah. The broad fact remains that Isaiah's public attitude at this time was based on a foreknowledge of the course of events which could not have been reached by any estimate of political probabilities. The immediate danger proved to be as trivial and evanescent as he persistently declared it to be, while the fatal results of the course chosen by Ahaz, though deferred for a time, were experienced in the disasters of Sennacherib's invasion.

We have yet to notice the significant incident which closes this chapter of the prophet's history (viii. 16—18). The rejection of his message by the people seems to have led to a temporary cessation of his public activity; and he marks his sense of the importance of the event by a singular action, which is described as "binding up the testimony and sealing the instruction among his disciples." The expressions no doubt are somewhat obscure; but the most natural supposition is that they refer to a written record of the prophecies delivered during the late crisis, which Isaiah solemnly sealed in presence of his "disciples," as a protest against the unbelief of the nation. Jehovah now "hideth his face from the house of Israel," i.e. he withdraws the guidance of the prophetic word which had been so coldly received. It remains for the prophet, and those who share his faith, to wait for the fulfilment of his word, and he appears by this act to separate himself and his adherents from the mass of their contemporaries and to form a new circle of religious fellowship based on faith in the revelation which Jehovah had given through himself. It is certain at any rate that at this time of general unbelief there was a band of men who were known as "disciples" of Isaiah; and it may well be that the fact so vaguely indicated, represents the most influential phase of his activity. The history of religions shews that the most enduring of all spiritual influences are those communicated through the close fellowship of a great personality with a limited number of susceptible minds, or in short through the relation of master and disciples. It would be no surprise to find this principle

exemplified in the career of Isaiah. It is but the practical development of his fundamental conception of a spiritual kernel within the nation; the "remnant" that should "return" was being formed under his eyes in the persons of the men who at this time began to detach themselves from an untoward generation and gather round him for inspiration and instruction.

iii. The silence of Isaiah does not seem to have been broken by any public pronouncement during the remainder of the reign of Ahaz. In a short oracle assigned by its title to the year of that king's death (ch. xiv. 29—32), he appears to speak as one who has an acknowledged position of authority in the direction of affairs of state; and such a change in the prophet's relations to the court would be naturally explained by the accession of Hezekiah. If we accept the view that Hezekiah succeeded to the throne in 727 this prophecy would signalise Isaiah's return to power after about six or seven years of retirement under the government of Ahaz. It is true that the genuineness of the title, and indeed of the prophecy itself, are widely disputed; but there does not seem to be any real difficulty in supposing that Isaiah uttered such an oracle at this time. In any case the accession of Hezekiah, a ruler of a very different stamp from his father, must have presented a new opening for the furtherance of Isaiah's public aims, of which we may be sure he would not fail to take advantage.

In the early part of this reign, he found an unexpected ally in the person of Micah of Moresheth Gath, whose work dates from the years immediately preceding the fall of the Northern Kingdom (cf. Mic. i. 6 with Jer. xxvi. 18). That the work of Micah made a profound impression on his contemporaries is seen from the remarkable incident related in Jer. xxvi. 17—19. We learn from that passage that the point which excited most attention in Micah's teaching was his definite prediction of the utter destruction of the capital and its sanctuary for the sins of the nobles who "built up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity" (ch. iii. 10—12). This is a thought which probably found no echo in the message of Isaiah at this time (see below, p. lxii); although it must have been familiar to

those who remembered his earlier prophecies. But whilst in this one respect Micah represents a somewhat different point of view from Isaiah's, in all essential matters the two prophets exhibit the most complete agreement. The picture of the state of Judah presented by the book of Isaiah is confirmed in almost every particular by the writings of Micah; and the coincidence proves that no amelioration of the condition of the common people had taken place since Isaiah first appeared as a prophet. Micah, indeed, depicts the wrongs of the peasantry with a vehement indignation natural in one who lived at a distance from the capital and in all probability belonged himself to the class which suffered most severely from the corruption and injustice which reigned in Jerusalem. It cannot be said that Isaiah deals less severely with these evils, but his political interests were wider than Micah's, and he never lost sight of the importance of good government and the necessity for social distinctions within the community. Hence while Micah contemplates simply a sweeping away of the intolerable system of government under which he lived, Isaiah steadily looks forward to a reformation of the aristocracy as a primary condition of the welfare of the state. Yet Isaiah must have eagerly welcomed the response which his teaching met from the common people as represented by a kindred spirit like Micah. It must have strengthened his hopes for a better time when all classes of the nation would cooperate in the promotion of the highest interests of morality and religion; when the demand for righteousness which rose from the ranks of the commonalty would be answered by "a king reigning in righteousness and princes ruling in judgment" (xxxii. 1).

In the sphere of politics Isaiah consistently upheld the maxim that the safety of the state lay in abstinence from all attempts to recover its independence and in quiet resignation to the will of Jehovah. There is not the least reason to believe that the prophet ever entertained a hope that by following the course he recommended Judah might be spared the crowning disaster of an Assyrian invasion. That great act of judgment was irrevocably decreed by Jehovah, and could not

be finally averted by any line of policy however prudent or even religious it might be. Isaiah's purpose was simply to secure that *when* the judgment came its salutary effects might be experienced by as large a section of the nation as possible; and with this ultimate object in view he counselled a patient acceptance of the irksome political situation in which Judah was placed, and above all an attitude of neutrality in the repeated struggles which were made by the surrounding nations against Assyria. This of course was on the surface a very different line of action from that which he urged on Ahaz in the year 735; but both were founded on the one fundamental principle by which Isaiah's statesmanship was governed. Then, he sought to prevent Ahaz from entering into an alliance with Tiglath-pileser, involving a dishonourable subjection to the Assyrian Empire. Now, under Hezekiah, he sets his face against all schemes for violating that compact by an alliance with Egypt or any other country opposed to Assyria. But the religious motive in both cases was his antipathy to the spirit of unbelief which he discovered in all attempts to effect political salvation by human wisdom and the help of heathen states. How jealously at this time he watched over the first manifestations of hostility towards Assyria, and how prompt he was to check them, is shewn by two prophecies belonging to the first half of Hezekiah's reign. One is the oracle on Philistia already referred to (ch. xiv. 29—32), in which he announces a terrible chastisement of the Philistine cities at the hands of the Assyrians, and stakes the safety of Israel on Jehovah's power and purpose to protect Mount Zion. The other (ch. xx.) is dated in the year of the Tartan's expedition against Ashdod (711), and contains a still more emphatic warning against the folly of trusting to Egypt for help. From the fact that Hezekiah had never as yet definitely committed himself to overt rebellion, we may judge that these warnings were not without effect. It is important to observe that down to the year 711 Isaiah anticipated a great extension of the Assyrian Empire before its power should be broken. The conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia (ch. xx.) was an event that could not come about in a day, and when the prophet

uttered that prediction he cannot have looked for an immediate termination to the proud and victorious career of Assyria. This fact has to be noticed because of a certain modification of Isaiah's outlook in the next great discourse to which our attention must be directed.

As the inevitable collision between Judah and the world-power drew near, Isaiah found it necessary to expound in a set discourse his inspired convictions with regard to the mission of Assyria and the limits assigned to it in the scheme of Jehovah's universal government. It was a theme which had never as yet been systematically handled from the point of view of prophecy. Both Amos and Hosea had recognised in Assyria the providential instrument of judgment on the sin of Israel, and had assumed that when its commission was executed it would in some way be removed and not be permitted to impede the development of Jehovah's gracious purposes towards His people. But neither of them was led to reflect on the enigma presented by Jehovah's use of a human instrument which scorned His authority and obeyed no law but its own savage lust of plunder and destruction. It was a problem, however, which could not fail to thrust itself on the mind of Isaiah, as he marked the unrelenting advance of Assyria towards universal dominion and became aware of the ruthless and impious spirit which animated the masters of those irresistible legions. How could an immoral force be used for moral ends? When and where and how would the Assyrian overstep the limits of his commission and appear in open conflict with the purpose of Him who raised him up? And when that point was reached, how would Jehovah rid Himself of the formidable tool which He had fashioned to execute His strange work on the earth? Such questions as these find their answer in ch. x. 5—34, one of the longest and most characteristic of Isaiah's utterances and perhaps the grandest exposition of the religious interpretation of history that ever was written¹. (See the Introductory Note to ch. x. 5—34.)

What is most distinctive in Isaiah's representation is that

¹ The passage is of uncertain date, but most probably belongs to the beginning of the reign of Sennacherib.

the final trespass of the Assyrian is conceived as taking the form of an assault on the inviolable seat of Jehovah's earthly government in Jerusalem. It is when he stands under the walls of the capital, "swinging his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion," (*v.* 32) that a destructive blow will be dealt to him: "the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, shall lop the boughs with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the lofty shall be humbled" (*v.* 33). Thus after Assyria has proved the impotence of all other gods by destroying in succession the peoples that served and trusted in them, the breaking of its power on the soil of Palestine will reveal to all the world the true divinity of Jehovah, and vindicate the truth that its whole enterprise had been controlled and guided to this issue by the Holy One of Israel. Never, perhaps, had a great religious idea been more boldly staked on the success of a definite historical prediction. But through all the troubles and excitement that filled the early years of Sennacherib's reign Isaiah never wavered in the assurance that his words would be verified by the event. The expectation of a great and speedy disaster to the Assyrian armies becomes one of the sustaining motives of his ministry, and he proclaims it with unhesitating confidence, not only to his own countrymen (as in *ch.* xiv. 24—27 and xvii. 12—14) but also to the ambassadors from Ethiopia who at this time visited Jerusalem (*ch.* xviii.).

This brings us to the important group of prophecies issued by Isaiah during and immediately before the invasion of Sennacherib (*ch.* xxviii.¹—xxxi. [*? xxxii f.*]; xxii.). It was a time of unprecedented activity on the part of the prophet, when nearly every leading principle of his ministry stands out with singular clearness and force. It is not easy, however, to form a consistent conception of his attitude and action during this crisis. Two main ideas cross each other throughout the discourses; on the one hand the necessity for a severe judgment on Jerusalem in which the city shall be reduced to the utmost distress and humiliation, and on the other hand the certainty that the

¹ The first six verses of *ch.* xxviii. must have been spoken before the destruction of Samaria, but they were probably republished at this time.

crisis will end in the destruction of Assyria and the introduction of a glorious era for the people of God. At times (especially in xxix. 4; xxxii. 13 f.; xxii. 1—14) the first thought is pushed so far as apparently to exclude the other, so that the prophet seems to speak with a double voice, now uttering unrelieved oracles of doom, and again consoling the people with visions of the brighter future. The manner in which the two ideas alternate—each prophecy of judgment passing into a captivating picture of the idyllic peace and felicity just about to break on the nation—also presents a literary problem of some difficulty. We cannot hope to explain these phenomena to our entire satisfaction, because the oracles would naturally be modified in the act of committing them to writing, and we do not know to what extent they correspond with Isaiah's spoken message at the time. Nevertheless one or two aspects of the situation are revealed with unmistakeable distinctness; and on these it will be best to concentrate our attention.

The most prominent feature of Isaiah's activity which appears in xxviii.—xxx., is his opposition to the project of rebellion in alliance with Egypt. This led him almost single-handed into a prolonged conflict with the leaders of the Egyptian party, whose influence was then in the ascendant at Hezekiah's court. Amongst these men a high official named Shebna (probably a foreigner) enjoys the distinction of being the only private individual who falls under the lash of Isaiah's invective (ch. xxii. 15 ff.). How great the prophet's political influence was is shewn by the anxiety of the conspirators to keep him in the dark with regard to the plot that was being hatched (xxix. 15; xxx. 1). In this they did not succeed; Isaiah's ceaseless vigilance unmasked their design, and he was able to follow the negotiations step by step with reiterated warnings. On one occasion we find him engaged in a heated altercation with the leaders of the war party, whom he had apparently surprised at a carousal held to celebrate what they called a "covenant with death and an agreement with the underworld" (xxviii. 8 ff.). More than once he satirises the craft and subtlety on which the conspirators prided themselves; and denounces the secrecy in which they screened

their proceedings as an attempt to outwit the Almighty (xxix. 15; xxx. 1—12; xxxi. 1, 2). A parting glimpse of the ill-fated enterprise is probably given in ch. xxx. 6, 7, where the prophet pictures the heavily laden caravan making its way across the desert with presents from Hezekiah to the potentates of the Nile Valley. Isaiah's protest was therefore unavailing. The intrigue of the nobles prevailed over the wiser counsels of the prophet; and for the second time in his life he seems to have retired from a bootless controversy with a solemn testimony against the infatuation which had seized the whole people. Once more, as in the days of Ahaz, he embodied the substance of his message in a permanent written record, that it might be a witness against the unbelief and rejection of the divine revelation which must surely end in national disaster (xxx. 8 ff.).

There is no doubt that for the moment the policy adopted by the court was popular with all classes of the community. The prospect of a war with Assyria was eagerly welcomed by the reckless patriotism of the common people; and the spirit of levity manifested by the capital at this time seemed to Isaiah not less irreligious than the carnal tendencies of the court. A certain air of mirth and gaiety appears at all times to have impressed him as characteristic of the population of Jerusalem,—the “jubilant city” as he twice names it (xxii. 2; xxxii. 13; cf. v. 14). Some of the gloomiest oracles belonging to this period were called forth by thoughtless exhibitions of this temper of mind which came under the prophet's observation. Looking on the merry throng that gathered in the temple court at one of the great annual festivals, he uttered the “Woe to Ariel” of ch. xxix. 1—4, in which he predicts the humiliation of the impenitent city within the space of one or two years. Another time it was the careless and scornful attitude of the women that moved him to deliver a very similar message of doom (xxxii. 9—14). But the worst display of this feeling seems to have occurred at the very moment when Isaiah looked for some token of penitential submission to the will of Jehovah. The difficult prophecy of ch. xxii. 1—14, which exceeds in severity any other in the whole book, refers most probably to what took place

when the first blockade of Jerusalem was raised in consequence of Hezekiah's surrender. That was emphatically a day on which "the Lord Jehovah of hosts called to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth" (*v.* 12). But instead of this, it was the occasion of a senseless outburst of mirth and festivity which astounded the prophet, and for the moment obliterated from his mind the vision of a happy future. Heedless of the late disasters, and the humiliating conditions of peace, the city kept holiday in honour of its deliverance, the house-tops were crowded with spectators watching the departure of the Assyrian army, and universal hilarity expressed the prevalent sentiment of the hour, "let us eat and drink for to-morrow we shall die" (*v.* 13). Isaiah was at first moved to tears by such a revelation of the incorrigible hardness of the people under Jehovah's chastisements (*v.* 4), but at length sorrow gives way to righteous indignation and in his inner ear there sounded, like a knell, the awful sentence of rejection, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts" (*v.* 14).

It may fairly be inferred from these three prophecies that Isaiah entertained no expectation of salvation for the mass of his countrymen, and that he was saved from absolute pessimism only by his unquenchable faith in an elect "remnant" and by the hopes that sprang from that conviction. There is no section of his writings where these hopes find grander or clearer expression than the discourses of Sennacherib's reign. The prophet felt that the hour of the decisive conflict between Jehovah and the world-power was at hand; and he knew that in the last extremity Jerusalem would be protected by the direct intervention of the Almighty (*xxix.* 7, 8; *xxx.* 5). This thought is most powerfully expressed in an imaginative picture of the judgment on Assyria contained in *ch.* *xxx.* 27—33 (*cf.* *xxx.* 8, 9). The crisis of Jerusalem's fate becomes the occasion of that final revelation of the majesty of God to which Isaiah had looked forward from the beginning of his work, and which he had with increasing distinctness connected with the overthrow of the Assyrian power. The whole history of redemption converges to this one event; it is

the consummation of Jehovah's work of judgment on both Israel and Assyria, and the inauguration of the reign of holiness and peace reserved for the purified remnant of the nation. Hence it is that the threats of judgment which the prophet was constrained by the perverseness of the people to utter are constantly relieved by ideal pictures of salvation in which he found a refuge from the discouragements and confusions of the present. It is possible that these passages may have been addressed in the first instance to his own disciples rather than to the people at large; at all events they shew how firmly he held to the belief that out of the immediate trial there would emerge a regenerate nation to enjoy the temporal and spiritual blessings of the Messianic age (xxix. 17—24; xxx. 18—26; xxxii. 1—8).

We have now traced Isaiah's activity to the close of the first attack of Sennacherib on Jerusalem, and we have seen that up to that moment nothing had occurred to modify his stern verdict on the disposition of the inhabitants. For what follows we are almost entirely dependent on the historical appendix of the book (ch. xxxvi., xxxvii.) and the prophecies imbedded there. We are at once struck by the change that has passed over the prophet's attitude in the short interval. The note of rebuke and menace which was so prominent during the first stages of the invasion has wholly disappeared from his teaching; his tone is one of serene confidence and his message is an unconditional assurance of the collapse of the Assyrian enterprise. It is not so difficult as it might appear to account for this sudden alteration in the prophet's demeanour. The renewal of the demand for the surrender of Jerusalem had a most salutary effect on the disposition of Hezekiah, and no doubt on the court and the populace as well. The king recognised the hopeless plight in which his adventurous policy had landed him, and, thoroughly humbled, throws himself unreservedly on the protection of Jehovah and the guidance of His prophet. On the other hand the perfidious conduct of Sennacherib, and his blasphemous defiance of the God of Israel, had put him in the wrong; he had committed the crowning offence against the majesty of Jehovah which Isaiah had long foreseen. He felt

therefore that the time of Judah's chastisement was past, and that of Sennacherib's downfall had arrived. All that remained for him to do was to sustain the faith and courage of Hezekiah with the assurance that Jehovah was with him in his refusal to submit to the demands of Sennacherib. It is not necessary here to follow the details of the narrative. What is most remarkable in the oracles of this time is the sobriety of the prediction on which Isaiah based his encouragement to resistance. He drops no hint of the frightful catastrophe which was to break the power of Assyria in that region for a whole generation. He simply announces that the Assyrian shall "hear a rumour and return to his own land," there to perish by the sword (xxxvii. 7), that "by the way that he came by the same he shall return," without having so much as "shot an arrow" against Jerusalem (*vv.* 29, 33, 34 f.). All this of course was strictly fulfilled, and would of itself form a complete vindication of Isaiah's authority to speak in the name of his God. But the sudden and terrible calamity which overwhelmed the army of Sennacherib answered in some degree to the most dramatic of his earlier prophecies (*x.* 33 f.; *xvii.* 12 ff.; *xviii.* 3 ff.; *xxx.* 27 ff.) and proved that all through his career Isaiah had been inspired with a true foreknowledge which no calculation of probabilities could have attained.

The comparative moderation of Isaiah's last utterances must not lead us to underestimate the heroism of faith which enabled him to stand out at this juncture as the saviour of his country. The political risks of the course he advocated were indeed tremendous; for a renewed declaration of war against Assyria must have seemed to all human sagacity a perfectly desperate policy. But far more momentous were the religious issues at stake. If Jerusalem had then been surrendered or captured, all that had been gained by the work of Isaiah and other prophets would have been lost to Israel and to the world. The spiritual religion which lay in germ in the teaching of Isaiah was not as yet capable of existing apart from the nationality in which it had been born, and hence the preservation of the Hebrew state was of paramount importance for the conser-

vation of the true knowledge of God. Yet with all this in view Isaiah never wavered. While all around him were paralysed with fear, his confidence remained unshaken, and in the supreme hour of danger he boldly announced that the city would be saved and the word of the Lord established. His success in this last emergency, after so many defeats at the hands of an unbelieving nation and its rulers, was an event which has had "more influence on the life of subsequent generations than all the conquests of Assyrian kings; for it assured the permanent vitality of that religion which was the cradle of Christianity¹."

The remainder of Isaiah's life is wrapped in obscurity. How long he survived the deliverance, how his last years were occupied, in what spirit he faced the problems of a new century, we cannot tell. It is an attractive conjecture of Duhm that his most soaring pictures of the Messiah's kingdom (ii. 1-4; xi. 1-8; xxxii. 1-6) come from his latest years, when the aged prophet, after a life spent in labour and conflict, turned with rapture to that ideal future which in spite of all delays and disappointments must surely be realised. It is an attractive idea, but nothing more. A Jewish tradition current in the 2nd century A.D. asserts that he outlived Hezekiah and perished in the heathen reaction under Manasseh; but this also, though not inherently incredible, is destitute of historical value. This is a case in which the silence of scripture is as instructive as its speech. For it reminds us that Isaiah's life work really ended with the events of 701. It was enough for one man to have guided the policy of his country through its first eventful collision with the world power, which in its own ruthless fashion was preparing the way for a new civilisation; to have enunciated the principles of the moral government of the universe that made monotheism a practical power in history; to have enriched eschatology with the figure of the ideal King of God's kingdom; to have formed within the Jewish state a prophetic party in which the religion of the spirit eventually detached itself from its national environment; and to have left behind him an

¹ Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, p. 356.

illustrious example of that faith in the unseen and eternal without which humanity cannot reach the goal appointed for it in the redemptive purpose of God.

CHAPTER III.

ISAIAH'S PROPHETIC CONCEPTIONS.

THE ruling ideas of Isaiah's ministry are not materially different from those of the other great prophets of the same period, Amos, Hosea and Micah. All these writers are animated by the same fundamental convictions with regard to the nature and character of Jehovah the God of Israel, His controversy with His people, the necessity of a national judgment to be inflicted through the agency of Assyria, and the final establishment of Jehovah's kingdom of righteousness and peace. But to this common body of prophetic doctrine each prophet contributes something that is distinctive, according as the bent of his genius or his peculiar experience led him to develop certain aspects of truth specially revealed to him. In the case of Isaiah we shall see that from the beginning his message contained some elements not to be found in the writings of his contemporaries; while other distinctive conceptions emerge in the course of his active ministry. Being preeminently a man of action and a statesman, his firm grasp of political facts imparts a special direction to his thoughts of the divine kingdom; and the necessity of presenting a definite religious policy to the rulers of the state gives a precision and fulness to his forecasts of the future in which he is hardly equalled by any other prophet. At the same time there is an organic unity in his teaching, all his leading ideas being implicitly contained in a few simple but comprehensive principles disclosed to him in his inaugural vision. They may be arranged under three heads: first, those more immediately connected with the prophet's conception of

God; second, his view of Israel; and third, the Messianic hope in its different aspects.

I. JEHOVAH AND HIS WORK.

Isaiah is a monotheist in the strictest sense of the term. There is no sentence in his writings which suggests that he attributed any sort of real existence to the false gods of the heathen; and if he never reasons on the subject of the divine unity, it is because the fact was too fundamental in his mind to admit of demonstration. He frequently speaks of idols as "the work of men's hands" (ii. 8, 20; xvii. 8; xxxi. 7); his favourite designation for them is *'ēlîlîm* ("not-gods" or "nonentities") a word which he seems himself to have coined to express his sense of their unreality. No language could be more opposed to the spirit of idolatry than this; for it expressly denies the belief which is at the foundation of the worship of idols, namely, that the image is the abode of a supernatural being able to protect and help his votaries. Nor are the prophet's allusions to the primitive nature-worship which survived in the land (i. 29, 30; xvii. 10, 11) less intolerant, or less decisive as to his attitude towards the polytheistic tendencies of his countrymen. For him, in short, there was but one divine Being; and all his conceptions of Godhead are summed up in the revelation which made him a prophet, the vision of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel (ch. vi.).

It has been already remarked (p. xxiv) that the aspect of the divine nature chiefly expressed by this vision is that of overwhelming and awe-inspiring majesty. The effect produced on the mind by Isaiah's magnificent description is far more impressive and convincing on this point than any analysis of the contents of the vision can be. But if we must analyse, we cannot fail to observe how every touch in the picture emphasises the general conception of Jehovah as a transcendently glorious Being, in whose awful presence no unconsecrated mortal can stand. The throne "high and lofty" on which He sits indicates that He is a King, and not the King of Israel alone, but the absolute, universal Sovereign, (*ādôn*) whose glory is the fulness of

the whole earth. The fiery creatures, the Seraphs, who are the ministers of His court, and who reflect something of His ineffable glory, nevertheless veil themselves before Him in the consciousness of their imperfection, while the hymn of praise that continually ascends from their lips expresses their sense of His adorable and incomparable majesty. Further, the fear of death which overtakes the prophet as he gazes unbidden on this solemn mystery, as well as the symbol of his expiation, which is by contact with the fire in which Jehovah dwells, and also the sternness of the divine message to Israel, all contribute to the impression which this scene conveys of Jehovah's unapproachable majesty.

The chant of the seraphs contains two words which may be said to sum up the import of the vision in so far as it is a revelation of God. Of these the first is the word *holy*, expressing what Jehovah is in Himself; while the second—*glory*—appears to denote an aspect of His Godhead which is reflected in the works of nature.

In order to understand the significance of the term "holiness" (*qôdesh*) in Isaiah's conception of God, we have to start from a much lower level of religious thinking than that which is represented by his teaching. The word is not confined to the religion of Israel, but was used throughout Semitic antiquity as the most comprehensive predicate of deity, although the idea primarily expressed by it is somewhat uncertain. If, as many writers believe, it comes from a root signifying "separation" or "distance" it would embody the notion of the contrast between the divine and the human which was perhaps characteristic of the conception of God common to the Semitic peoples. It is certain at all events that "holiness" does not express any special attribute of the divine nature but rather the general notion of godhead, as distinguished from every other form of existence. Such a phrase, for example, as "the holy gods," which occurs in the inscription of Eshmunazar king of Sidon, as well as in Dan. iv. 8, 9, 18, v. 11, is a mere redundancy of speech, gratifying the reverential feeling of the speakers, but conveying no information as to the character of the gods. Least of all did the term connote ethical

purity ; for the deities to whom it was applied by the heathen Semites were not only immoral from our point of view, but were not even regarded as moral beings by their own worshippers¹.

Now the writings of the Hebrew prophets, and of Isaiah in particular, mark an important stage in the development of this notion of holiness. At first sight it might seem inexplicable that a purely formal idea, expressing no positive conception beyond that of awe-inspiring power and majesty, should become a central doctrine of the prophetic theology. But in truth it is the very vagueness and comprehensiveness of the term which explains the profound significance attaching to it in the mind of Isaiah. By taking this word, which by universal consent embraced all that was distinctive of deity, *and restricting it to Jehovah*, he expressed the fundamental truth that in the God of Israel and in Him alone are concentrated all the attributes of true divinity². Holiness thus ceases to be an abstract quality shared by a number of divine beings ; it comes to denote the fulness of what Jehovah is as He is known from His revelation of Himself to the consciousness of the prophet. It signalises the most notable fact in the religious history of Israel, the formation of an idea of God which at once placed an impassable gulf between Jehovah and all other beings who claimed the title of divine ; and it is this positive idea of God, expressed in the doctrine of Jehovah's unique holiness, that is the mainstay of Isaiah's ministry.

From this point of view it is immaterial to determine how much or how little of permanent religious truth may have been contained in the primitive notion of holiness, which prevailed in

¹ With the secondary applications of the word to places, persons and things we are not here concerned ; but the fact that the Hierodouloi, or sacred prostitutes, of the Canaanite religion were known as "holy women" furnishes decisive evidence of the complete divorce in ancient times of the two ideas of holiness and morality.

² No attempt is here made to discriminate between what is peculiar to Isaiah and what is common to him and other prophets. It is not implied that he was the only, or the first, writer who made this application of the word "holy."

the Semitic world. It is probable that the word universally conveyed impressions of the awful might of the Godhead such as are reflected in Isaiah's vision, just as the prophet's presentiment of death may be akin to the popular belief that the direct sight of God bodes destruction to mortals (Jud. xiii. 22, &c.). This at any rate is an element in Isaiah's idea of God and is therefore included under the word "holiness." But a term which embraces every distinctive attribute of deity must necessarily expand and deepen with every advance in the true knowledge of God. Hence we might expect that under the influence of Revelation the idea would be filled with ethical contents, and would denote the moral perfectness which belongs to the character of Jehovah. That this is included in Isaiah's use of the word appears clearly from the sense of sin which the vision of God awakened within him. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." This consciousness of moral defect cleaving to him answers to the conception of Jehovah as a Being of spotless purity, separated not only from nature, but from all that is imperfect and sinful—One who is "of too pure eyes to behold evil" (Hab. i. 13). Thus in Isaiah's hands the word "holy" becomes a complete expression for the doctrine of God which is maintained by the prophets. It denotes first, the natural attributes of power and majesty which are inseparable from the thought of Deity; second, the ethical character and perfection of the God of Revelation; while finally by being restricted in its application to Jehovah it asserts His exclusive right to the adoration and homage not merely of His own people but of all His rational creatures.

The second word, "glory" (*kābôd*) is used in the Old Testament in a variety of senses. It is certainly less comprehensive than "holy," and is perhaps hardly to be considered a strictly theological term. Nevertheless its use in the Trisagion suggests a striking aspect of Isaiah's conception of the relation of God to the universe. In nearly all cases "glory" means the external manifestation of power or greatness, whether of a king (Isa. viii. 7; Ps. xxiv. 7 ff.) or a nation (Isa. xvii. 3, 4; Mic. i. 15) or an individual (Gen. xxxi. 1;

Job xxix. 20), or humanity as such (Ps. viii. 5)¹. The glory of God is spoken of chiefly in two senses; first, of the honour and praise due to Him from men (or angels) (Mal. i. 6); and second, of the dazzling brightness in which he arrays Himself when He supernaturally manifests His presence on earth (Ez. iii. 23, &c.; Ex. xvi. 10, &c.). Neither of these meanings, however, quite suits the use of the term in the second line of the Seraphs' hymn, which literally translated reads "the filling of the whole earth is His glory." Obviously "glory" is here something objective, as distinct from the glory ascribed to God in the praises of His creatures; while it is at the same time something "far more deeply interfused" with nature than the supernatural phenomena of the cloud of fire and light. The general idea must be that all which the world contains, all that is sublime and powerful in nature, is the outward expression and symbol of the majesty which belongs to Him as the God of all the earth.

This leads us to consider an important development of the doctrine of Jehovah's universal sovereignty which is conspicuous in the writings of Isaiah; namely, the idea of a "work" or "plan" which is the revelation of Jehovah in history. In the vision the Great King is represented as deliberating with Himself on the interests of His Kingdom, and calling for a messenger to represent Him on earth. Isaiah's mind was thus directly led to the thought of a divine purpose which is being progressively realised in the providential government of the world. The thought was evidently one that laid a deep hold upon him (see ch. v. 12; x. 12, 23; xiv. 24, 26 f.; [xxii. 11] xxviii. 21 f.). By the "work" of Jehovah he means chiefly, indeed, (though, as we shall see, not exclusively), the great consummation of history towards which events were rapidly hastening. It is a "final and decisive work" which Jehovah is about to execute (x. 23; xxviii. 22). Its goal is the manifestation of His own Godhead, and the establishment of His Kingdom of righteousness on the earth. This is effected in the "day" of Jehovah, which appears to be conceived from the first as a day of universal

¹ Etymologically, the word comes from a root signifying "heaviness"; hence that which is *impressive* as a display of power or dignity.

judgment, in which all human pride will be humbled, and men will fling their idols to the moles and the bats and hide themselves from "the glory of His majesty when He arises to terrify the earth" (ii. 17, 19 ff.). Later on, the idea assumes a more definite shape in the announcement of a contest between Jehovah and the power of this world as concentrated in the Assyrian empire. Jehovah quietly looks on in His dwelling-place (xviii. 4) until the moment for action has arrived, and then suddenly His anger explodes against His enemies and consumes them. But this is not all that Isaiah means by the "work" of God. Not only in the supreme crisis of history but in the stirring political changes of his time the prophet discerns the operation of Jehovah's hands. Not to perceive this divine working is one of the great faults with which he charges the irreligious leaders of his people (v. 12 ; xxii. 11). Just as Jehovah's glory fills the whole earth, though the eyes of men are blind to it, so His activity pervades all human history, although from the lips of unbelievers the prophet hears the shallow scoff : "let Him hasten His work that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh that we may know it" (v. 19). It is this conception of a continuous work of Jehovah in His Providence that enables Isaiah to bring the idea of God into such close contact with the events of his time, and makes the doctrine of the universal divine Sovereignty so living and practical a principle of his ministry. History is to him a drama rapidly approaching its *denouement*, and in the great convulsions which were shaking the foundations of the political world he hears the footsteps of the Almighty marching onwards to a day of crisis and final hope for humanity. And thus Jehovah "reigns supreme alike in the realm of nature, and the sphere of human history ; and the crash of kingdoms, the total dissolution of the old order of the Hebrew world, which accompanied the advance of Assyria, is to the prophet nothing else than the crowning proof of Jehovah's absolute dominion, asserting itself in the abasement of all that disputes His supremacy¹."

¹ Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, p. 226.

Such appear to be the leading elements in Isaiah's conception of God. Special applications of them will meet us when we come to consider the relations between Jehovah and Israel. Other attributes than those mentioned are of course frequently referred to, for example, wisdom (xxviii. 29; xxxi. 2), jealousy or zeal (ix. 7), anger and the like. Judicial righteousness is directly connected with the idea of holiness in the remarkable sentence: "the holy God shall sanctify Himself (i.e. shew Himself holy) in righteousness" (v. 16). But all such attributes are included in the personal, anthropomorphic idea of God which Isaiah shares with all the Old Testament writers. In spite of the infinite distance between God and man, expressed by the term holiness, it still remains true that the divine image in man is the basis of all religious relations between God and man, and that Jehovah cannot be rightly conceived, except as endowed with the attributes and even the emotions of moral personality. It is to be remarked, however, as characteristic of Isaiah that the sterner aspects of the divine character are those almost exclusively insisted upon. He never speaks of "love" or "kindness" as attributes of Jehovah. There is indeed a purpose of grace underlying all His dealings with men, and the thought is expressed that the Lord "waits" till He can have compassion on the people (xxx. 18). But Jehovah's message through Isaiah contains no note of yearning affection like that which melted the tender heart of Hosea. We search his writings in vain for such pathetic images as the husband seeking with pure and unselfish love to reclaim the unfaithful wife from a life of shame and misery, or the father teaching his child to walk, holding it by its arms. To the strong nature of Isaiah, God reveals Himself as the absolute Sovereign, of an infinite majesty; and when He speaks through him to men it is always in accents of regal authority.

II. JEHOVAH AND ISRAEL.

Like all the prophets, Isaiah bases his message to his countrymen on the conception of a unique relation between Jehovah and the nation of Israel. In virtue of this relation Jehovah is

Israel's God, and Israel is Jehovah's people. These propositions express the two sides of what may be called the religious consciousness of the nation; and the prophets, although they may have given them an interpretation not understood by the bulk of their contemporaries, nevertheless assert the principle that Israel stands in a peculiar relation to Jehovah, and that in a special sense Jehovah is the God of Israel. And here we come upon a fact of primary importance in the prophetic view of religion, although it is one which it is difficult to state briefly in its full significance without one-sided exaggeration. Religion, as taught by the prophets, is not a matter between God and the individual soul, but between God and the nation. Israel is invariably conceived by them as a national unity, and frequently figured as a moral person, and it is this unity, embodied in the organisation of the state, which is the religious subject. Individual Israelites are, as a matter of course, bound to acknowledge and honour Jehovah in their conduct; but in all directly religious acts they appear as members of the nation; and all their relationships to God are determined by the fact that in their several spheres of life they belong to the community which is the immediate object of Jehovah's regard. This is a truth which has to be constantly borne in mind in reading the prophets; the love or faith or obedience they require are faith and love and obedience on the part of the whole people in its corporate capacity, and the sins they denounce, though committed by individuals, are sins in which, in virtue of the principle of solidarity, the whole nation is implicated.

Isaiah's sense of this peculiar relation of Jehovah to Israel is inseparably bound up with his general conceptions of the divine nature. The thought of God as the universal Sovereign is specialised in the idea of His kingship over Israel, an idea whose influence makes itself felt in the whole of the prophet's activity. Israel is the immediate sphere of Jehovah's royal functions, and it is in His name that Isaiah claims an authoritative voice in the direction of the affairs of the state. He speaks to his countrymen as one who has "seen the King" and has been commissioned to declare His will as the supreme law of the nation.

Thus through the medium of the prophetic word the abstract doctrine of the divine sovereignty is translated into living and personal relations between Jehovah the King and Israel His kingdom. Similarly the supreme quality of holiness, or essential divinity, becomes a practical factor in religion through being brought to bear on Jehovah's relation to His people. He is, to use a favourite title of Isaiah's, "the Holy One of Israel¹," i.e. the Holy Being who is the God of Israel. Here again Israel is conceived as the community within which Jehovah reveals Himself as He truly is, and by which His character as the Holy One is to be recognised, and exhibited to the world. The whole of Isaiah's conception of national religion is summed up in the phrase to "sanctify the Lord of Hosts" (viii. 13, xxix. 23); that is, to acknowledge and worship His Godhead, and to cherish towards Him the sentiment of fear and reverence which was impressed on the prophet's own mind by the revelation of His holiness.

The prophet's judgment on the actual state of the nation is but the application of these principles to the religious and social problems of his time. The conviction of an irreconcilable breach between Jehovah and His people, which he shares with all the great pre-Exilic prophets, springs from his first personal contact with the awful holiness of Israel's God. The immediate effect of the vision was to produce a sense, not merely of his own uncleanness, but of the uncleanness of the whole actual life of the nation. He then realised what it was to "dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (vi. 5); and when he returned to his place among men, with a conscience purified and quickened by what he had experienced, he had to bear witness of his fellow-countrymen that "their tongue and their doings were against Jehovah to provoke the eyes of His glory" (iii. 8). His own lips had been purged by contact with the fire which is the emblem of the divine holiness; but at the same time he learned

¹ The phrase is almost limited to the book of Isaiah, forming one of the linguistic links between the two great divisions of the book. Elsewhere it occurs only in Ps. lxxi. 22, lxxviii. 41, lxxxix. 18; Jer. l. 29, li. 5; and, in a somewhat different form, in Ezek. xxxix. 7. There is little doubt, therefore, that it was first introduced by Isaiah.

that the only fire which could cleanse the unholy nation was the fire of judgment, which was to consume the base and worthless elements of the state till only the indestructible remnant, the holy seed, remained (vi. 13; cf. iv. 4 f.).

Thus the sense of Jehovah's holiness has its counterpart in the conviction of Israel's actual uncleanness, and it is important to observe how every article in Isaiah's indictment of the nation runs back to this fundamental antithesis. The prevalent idolatry was a direct and open denial of His Godhead, a degrading of Him to the level of the "nonentities" of the heathen Pantheon. Religion, as conceived and practised by the people, was not the heart-felt recognition of His holy character; the homage rendered to Him was purely formal, a "human tradition learned by rote" (xxix. 13), a profuse and elaborate sacrificial ritual (i. 10—17). The grinding tyranny of the upper classes, joined as it was with corrupt administration of justice, was an abuse of the sacred trust delegated by the Holy King to the "elders and princes of His people" (iii. 13—15). Israel, the vineyard of Jehovah, is ravaged by those whom He had appointed to be its keepers, and when He "looked for judgment, behold bloodshed; and for righteousness, behold a cry" (v. 7). The religious indifference, the scepticism, the luxury, the dissipation, of the statesmen and nobles, all proceed from the same root of insensibility to the claims of Jehovah's holiness, or the reality of His divinity; and their pride in horses and chariots, in fortifications and armies, in skilled diplomacy and strong coalitions reveals their utter unbelief in the spiritual Power which rules the universe. In all these features of society the prophet reads the symptoms of a deep-seated national ungodliness and apostasy, of a people in veiled rebellion against its true Sovereign. "They have forsaken Jehovah, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they have apostatised and gone backward" (i. 4). They are children in ungrateful and unnatural revolt against their Father (i. 2, xxx. 9). The alienation between Israel and its God is complete; Israel has forsaken Jehovah, and Jehovah has rejected His people (ii. 6).

There is one remarkable fact in Isaiah's ministry that reveals a darker view of Israel's spiritual condition than was expressed by any of his predecessors. He entered on his work in the full consciousness that the effect of his mission would be to seal the doom of his people (vi. 9 ff.). To many modern writers such a perception has seemed inconceivable in the case of a youthful prophet on the threshold of his public career; and it has been very generally held that this part of the vision is projected into the past from the disappointing experience of failure which came to the prophet some years later. But there is no justification for thus impugning the veracity of Isaiah's narrative. There is nothing incredible in the thought that in that supreme moment of inspiration the conviction was flashed into his mind that a revelation of Jehovah's holiness would be intolerable to the age in which he lived, so that the men he knew would be repelled and driven into deeper guilt and sin by every fresh disclosure of the mind and will of God. He saw, what perhaps no earlier teacher of Israel had seen, that the very clearness and fulness of the knowledge of God becomes a means of condemnation to men who have sunk so far that they love the darkness rather than the light. Thus while Amos speaks of a "famine of the word of the Lord" as the greatest calamity that could befall Israel, Isaiah grasps the deeper, though seemingly paradoxical truth, that a far more dangerous and testing experience lies in the exceeding abundance of the word of Jehovah, which is about to be vouchsafed to Israel¹.

The profound truth of this intuition was repeatedly verified in Isaiah's prophetic experience, and more than once he falls back on it, tracing the impenetrable hardness of the people to a judicial visitation of Jehovah. He did so when he retired defeated from his contest with Ahaz and the nation in the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war, which was probably the occasion of the first publication of the vision. In still stronger language he characterises the storm of opposition which was roused against him by his denunciation of the Egyptian alliance in the reign of Sennacherib. "They say to the prophets...get you out of the way,

¹ Duhm.

turn aside out of the path, *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us*" (xxx. 11); and Isaiah ascribes their infatuation to the fact that "Jehovah has poured out on them a spirit of deep sleep, and closed their eyes and muffled their heads" (xxix. 10).

Isaiah has been called the "prophet of Faith"; and the designation would be accurate if he were not the prophet of so many great thoughts besides. The idea that faith must be the ruling principle of political action for Israel, and is the indispensable condition of national salvation, is one to which he always attached supreme importance. There are three memorable sayings of his in which this truth is embodied, and which enable us to understand in what sense he used that great word of religion. These are: "if ye will not believe, ye shall not be established" (vii. 9); "he that believeth shall not make haste" (xxviii. 16,—see note on the verse); "in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (xxx. 15). These utterances seem to carry us into the very heart of Isaiah's teaching, for they express that which was deepest in his own spiritual life. To him revelation was an articulate personal word from the living God, the Holy One whom he had seen in vision; and he received it with the unhesitating confidence due to a Being of infinite wisdom and power, declaring His purpose in absolute faithfulness and truth. Isaiah believed and therefore he spoke. And knowing thus by experience what it was to live by faith, he dared to ask of statesmen groping their way blindly in a difficult and intricate situation, not seeing for themselves the work of Jehovah nor the operation of His hands, that they too should exercise the same virtue of implicit trust in the God whose sovereign will was made known to them in the prophetic word. There is no manifestation of loyalty to the Divine King on which the prophet lays greater stress than this. The capacity for faith in this sense becomes the measure and test of the nation's religious state; its refusal to believe is the final evidence that it is beyond the possibility of political salvation. Even when the fate of the people as a whole is sealed by the unbelief of its rulers, faith

remains as the principle of individual religion for those who separate themselves from the sin of their generation. The spiritual community which Isaiah saw forming itself within the physical Israel was constituted by faith in his prophetic message, and when he says of himself that he will "wait for Jehovah" (viii. 17), he expresses at the same time the attitude of those who were his disciples. When in a later prophecy (xxviii. 16) he speaks of the foundation of God's kingdom as already laid in Zion and promises safety to "him that believeth," he clearly means that the impending judgment has no terrors for him who takes his stand on the sure word of Revelation.

III. MESSIANIC IDEALS.

For the germ of Isaiah's eschatology we must go back once more to his inaugural vision, and the idea of the "remnant," which led to so many fruitful developments in the course of his ministry. The knowledge that a spiritual kernel of the nation would survive the successive waves of judgment was constantly present to the prophet's mind, and led his thoughts forward to an ideal age in which that remnant should blossom out into the perfect kingdom of the Lord. His writings abound in glowing pictures of the glorious day towards which events are ripening. The general conception is that of a new and final order of things, in which Zion, as the seat of God's kingdom of righteousness and peace, is the centre of light and blessing for the nations, and all nature becomes subservient to the needs of humanity. The representation includes features which are to our minds supernatural, although on the whole it may be said that (except in iv. 2—6) nature is merely idealised, through its evils being eliminated and its beneficent powers indefinitely enhanced. The later pictures especially (xxix. ff.) are bathed in an atmosphere of idyllic peace and happiness, the simple joys of rural life affording apparently to the aged prophet the best emblem of the perfect felicity reserved for the true people of Jehovah. For along with this line of thought there always goes the prophecy of a transformation of the national character. The

evil-doer is rooted out of the community, the poor and afflicted rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, the spiritual blindness which was characteristic of the people is taken away; and the true knowledge of God is diffused through all ranks and classes of society (xxix. 18 ff., xxx. 19 ff.). The blessings of Jehovah's government radiate from Israel to all the nations of the earth; "from Zion goes forth revelation and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem" (ii. 2-4). It is noteworthy that here and elsewhere (xviii. 7, xix. 24 f.¹) the nations are represented as retaining their political independence, and voluntarily submitting to the rule of Jehovah, whose just arbitrament supersedes war and brings in an era of universal peace. Finally it is to be remarked that this golden age is not conceived as a remote goal of history or the result of a long development, but as the immediate sequel of the prophet's own age, following closely on the desolation caused by the Assyrian conquest. In the most brilliant of his Messianic visions Isaiah compares it to a great light breaking on the land, dissipating the darkness of the invasion, bringing victory and rejoicing and prosperity in its train (ix. 1 ff.).

There is just one respect in which Isaiah's doctrine of the Remnant may be supposed to have given a peculiar direction to his anticipation of the future as compared with that of other prophets. The salvation of the remnant is to be effected on the soil of Judah. Hence the idea of a captivity, though not altogether foreign to his thinking (see v. 13), has not the religious significance which attaches to it in the prophecy of Hosea, or Jeremiah or Ezekiel. These prophets all appear to have regarded the Exile as the essential part of the discipline by which the conversion of Israel was to be effected, and they contemplated a captivity either of the entire nation or at least of that part of it with which the hope of the future lay. To Isaiah on the other hand captivity is a mere detail. The great redemption is to be wrought out within the land of Judah, and (in the later prophecies at least) by a deliverance of the capital from the power of the Assyrians. The "holy seed," the nucleus of the new

¹ Possibly not Isaiah's.

kingdom of God, remains in the land ; and the continuity of the national history is never absolutely broken¹.

The development of Isaiah's conceptions of the future, so far as it can be traced, turns on two great central ideas round which all the elements of his Messianic predictions group themselves. One is the idea of the personal Messiah, and the other the doctrine of the inviolability of Zion.

1. The word "Messiah" (anointed one) is never used in the Old Testament in the special sense to which it has been consecrated by Jewish and Christian usage. But it is the most appropriate term for that conception of an ideal King of the house of David, which so far as appears originated with Isaiah, and which proved to be the most perfect of all types of the Kingdom of God to be found in prophecy. The prophecies of Isaiah where the figure of this ideal King appears are ch. ix. 1—7, xi. 1—9 and xxxii. 1 ff. (cf. also xxxiii. 17). It is unfortunate that the dates of these passages cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. The prevalent view has been that they stand in chronological order, the first belonging to the reign of Ahaz, the second to an early period of Hezekiah's reign, and the last to the time of Sennacherib's invasion. But this view rests mainly on the assumption that they belong historically to the groups of discourses in which they occur, an assumption which is insufficiently supported by internal indications and hardly justified by a literary analysis of the book. Hence it is impossible to trace with confidence the history of the idea in Isaiah's mind or to fix the time when it was first disclosed to him. Another difficulty arises in connexion with the Immanuel prophecy of ch. vii. 14—16. If it could be assumed that in the mind of Isaiah the child Immanuel was identified with the child of ix. 6 f., and was therefore the destined sovereign of his people, it would go far to explain the genesis of the conception of the ideal representative of the Davidic dynasty. At that moment Ahaz must have appeared to the prophet an incarnation of all

¹ The passage xi. 10 ff., which speaks of a return of exiles, is of doubtful genuineness ; and one of the arguments against it is just the use of the word "remnant" for those who have gone into captivity.

that the King of Israel should not be, and although the child Immanuel is not expressly connected with the house of David, the idea that he was to take the place of the worthless and incompetent monarch to whom the sign was given is nevertheless suggested by the circumstances of the prophecy (see note on vii. 14—16). It is at least a remarkable coincidence that both here and in ix. 6 the destiny of the nation is made to turn on the birth of a child, and even if with most recent authorities we reject the Messianic interpretation of vii. 14, there will still remain a presumption that the two passages stand near to each other in time. If this conclusion be correct it follows that the image of the ideal Ruler first dawned on Isaiah's mind in the dark days when he saw the ruin of his country accelerated by the weakness and unbelief of the reigning king.

It has been remarked that the three great portraits of the Messiah, taken in the order in which they stand, exhibit a progressive waning of the mysterious aspects of His character, until at last the ideal seems to fade into the light of common day. It is undoubtedly the fact that the attributes and prerogatives of the King come to be presented in more sober and subdued colours and in less exalted language. In ix. 6, he is endowed with attributes bordering on the divine ; his fourfold name expressing some extraordinary and mysterious relation to Jehovah. He is called "Wonderful Counsellor, Hero-God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace." In xi. 1 ff., he is described as the shoot from the stock of Jesse, and as one uniquely endowed with the spirit of Jehovah for the perfect discharge of his kingly functions. And in xxxii. 1 he appears simply as an ordinary good king, reigning in righteousness and associated with princes of a like spirit ruling in judgment.

These facts no doubt suggest questions of some interest and difficulty. But the sense of disparity between the different representations is relieved by two considerations which have to be borne in mind in dealing with Isaiah's conception of the Messiah. In the first place, the thought of the Messianic King never replaces or overshadows in Isaiah's mind the primary truth of Jehovah's kingship over Israel. The earthly king is the

representative of Jehovah and rules in His name, but he is not himself conceived as a superhuman person, or as sharing the divine nature in a transcendental sense. This is clear as regards the second of the three passages (xi. 1 ff.) where the ideal perfection of the Messiah's government is ascribed simply to his possession of the fulness of the spirit of Jehovah which imparts to him the insight, the energy, and the piety necessary for his high office. And this is in accordance with the common teaching of the Old Testament that the source of all kingly virtues, as indeed of all capacity for noble and heroic action, is the spirit of the Lord, resting on men chosen by God for great achievements in His kingdom. Nor does the language of ix. 6 f. when fairly interpreted imply that the new king is more than human. What is there described is neither the person of the Messiah nor his character, but the divine powers that come to light in his government. There is no reason to think that even the great titles there bestowed on him, marvellously as they foreshadow the Christian doctrine of the Person of Christ, expressed to Isaiah's age anything more than this. When we read that his name shall be called "Hero-God," or "Everlasting Father," we are not to understand these terms as conveying the idea that he is a God-man, or possesses the metaphysical attributes of omnipotence and eternity. All the four names denote aspects of the Messiah's rule, which is itself, in virtue of his unique relation to God, the perfect embodiment and reflection of Jehovah's kingship over Israel and the world. His relation to Jehovah is, in short, simply the ideal relation of a king of Israel to Jehovah, and the only new thing is the completeness with which that ideal is to be realised through his endowment with the spirit of God. Now it is possible that Isaiah may have had a deeper sense at one time than at others of the exceptional qualities required for the exercise of the functions of kingship, and this may account for the difference of tone which characterises his utterances at different periods. But a radical change of view does not appear to exist, when we remember that from first to last his outlook was towards one who should fully realise the divine ends for which the monarchy existed in Israel.

The second thing to be observed is that in Isaiah's vision of the future the monarchy itself is but one institution among many, and presupposes a political organisation after the fashion of the existing Hebrew commonwealth. Hence there could be no incongruity, from the prophet's point of view, in thinking of the Messianic king as surrounded by an aristocracy, who cooperate with him in securing a just administration of the reconstructed state (xxxii. 1). A reform of the upper classes was an issue of the judgment on which Isaiah laid great stress from an early period of his work (i. 26); and there is nothing to suggest that he ever lost sight of this, although he afterwards attached greater importance to the person of the king. It is true that in xxxii. 1 the person of the king is not invested with the halo of divine attributes spoken of in ch. ix. and xi.; and this might seem to shew that the passage ought not to be classed amongst the prophecies of a personal Messiah. But that is a view which cannot be held, unless we go further and say that Isaiah had definitely abandoned the idea of the Messiah when he wrote ch. xxxii. The picture is in any case a picture of the Messianic age, and the king in the Messianic age is the Messiah, if the prophet retained his faith in a Messiah at all, which there is no sufficient reason to doubt. And in fact when he speaks of a king reigning in righteousness, he includes what is essential in his conception of the ideal King; for it is just the perfect discharge of the recognised duties of kingship which Isaiah regards as a task of such transcendent importance as to require the unique endowment of divine energies and virtues which is the distinctive element in his more ideal delineations of the Messiah.

2. The two ideas that Zion is the present seat of Jehovah's sovereignty and that it is to be the centre of the future kingdom of God appear in a large number of prophecies of Isaiah (i. 26 f., ii. 2—4, iv. 2—6, viii. 18, x. 32 f., xiv. 32, xviii. 7, xxviii. 16, xxix. 1, xxx. 19, 29, [xxxiii. 5, 14, 20 f.,] xxxvii. 32). In these there is nothing that is peculiar to Isaiah and little that requires explanation. It was in the Temple that he first saw the glory of Jehovah, and the thought that He dwelt there seems to have

been always present to his mind. And the further thought that Zion would occupy the same central position in the ideal age as in the present is a natural and inevitable consequence of the general principle that the future dispensation is always represented under forms derived from the present.

But there is a particular application of these truths which is not only distinctive of Isaiah, but apparently limited to a certain period of his ministry. It is that Zion as Jehovah's sanctuary is inviolable, that it shall be spared in the impending crisis of judgment, and form the refuge for those who are saved from the wreck of the nation, so that its sanctity becomes, along with the permanence of the Davidic kingdom, a pledge of the indestrucibility of the Jewish state. This concrete form of the principle does not appear to have been held by the prophet at the outset of his public life, for in ch. v. 14, 17 the destruction of Jerusalem seems to be distinctly contemplated. Nor is it clear that it was enunciated even in the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitish war, although the allusion to the waters of Shiloah as an emblem of Jehovah's invisible sovereignty and the emphasis laid on Jehovah's dwelling in Zion (viii. 6, 18) may perhaps point in this direction. The first unambiguous expression of it is probably to be found in xiv. 32, where we read that "Jehovah hath founded Zion and there the poor of His people find refuge." From this time onwards Isaiah seems to have held to the truth as the sheet anchor of his prophecy. We have seen already how largely it determined his attitude in the Assyrian invasion, and how signally his confidence was justified by the event. The assault on the sanctuary of Zion is the crowning insult of the Assyrian to the majesty of Jehovah, and by His protection of Jerusalem Jehovah gives to the world the demonstration of His divinity which as Isaiah anticipated would be speedily followed by the establishment of His everlasting kingdom. It must be admitted, however, that there is considerable uncertainty as to the precise sense in which Isaiah maintained this doctrine, and the range which he allowed to it, even in this last stage of his work. There is one oracle, usually assigned to this period (xxxii. 9 ff.), which seems to

amount to a prediction of the total overthrow of Jerusalem, and for this reason is pronounced spurious by many critics, and by one at least is assigned to the opening of his career. And in other passages threats are uttered (esp. xxii. 1 ff., xxix. 1 ff.) which appear to contemplate an equally sweeping catastrophe. The difficulty is to know how much is implied in the idea of the sanctity of Zion; how far it is equivalent to the actual preservation of the fortress of Jerusalem, and how far it is a spiritual fact symbolising the safety of those who in that hour of trial placed their faith in Jehovah's invisible power. The prophet may not have held an unvarying view on this point, and it is possible that the doctrine of the inviolability of Jerusalem was not to his mind the hard and fast dogma which it has become in the hands of his commentators.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHARACTER AND GENIUS OF ISAIAH.

THE possibilities of the prophetic office are nowhere more splendidly illustrated than in the career of Isaiah. Called in early manhood to the service of Jehovah, he gave himself to his mission with a whole-hearted devotion and singleness of aim which suffered no abatement in the course of a long and strenuous life. The work of a prophet was the vocation of his life, and every faculty of his being, every source of influence open to him, his social position and even the incidents of his private history, were all made subservient to the one end of impressing the mind of God on his generation. And to this task he brought a nature richly endowed with gifts belonging to the highest order of genius. He is great alike in thought and action, and unites the profoundest religious insight with a wide knowledge of men and affairs. If any single quality can be selected as specially prominent in Isaiah it is an imperious and masterful decision of character which makes him perfectly unhesitating in his judgments and inexorable in his demands. But more remarkable than any one feature is the balance and

harmonious working of powers rarely combined in a single individual. In the union of statesmanlike sagacity with impassioned and dignified oratory he may be compared with some of the greatest names in the history of republican Rome ; but Isaiah had, besides, the rapt vision of the seer and the fervour of religious enthusiasm. We must not be afraid to think of him as a 'visionary.' His perceptions of spiritual truth were such as we call intuitive and were frequently accompanied by experiences of an ecstatic kind. Although but one vision is recorded (ch. vi.) he uses several expressions which point to extraordinary mental processes as the form in which the will of Jehovah was communicated to him. He speaks of himself as being in the "grasp of the (divine) hand" (viii. 11) ; and of Jehovah of Hosts as revealed "in his ears" (v. 9, xxii. 14) : phrases which probably indicate that throughout life Isaiah was guided by that mysterious operation of the divine Spirit which appears to have been common to all the prophets. But whilst himself overmastered by the convictions that were thus conveyed to him, he manifests the most complete self-possession in the application of these truths to the circumstances of his time. In action as in speech he ever proves himself the sanest of men. His political vision is clear and untroubled, his judgment unerring, his maxims invariably reasonable and wise. "Never perhaps has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history¹."

The literary quality most conspicuous in the writings of Isaiah is the wealth and brilliancy of his imagination. His thought constantly and spontaneously blossoms into imagery, and the images are no mere rhetorical embellishments but are always impressive in themselves and always the appropriate and natural expression of his idea. No other Old Testament writer has the same power of picturesque and graphic description, or has at command such a variety of distinct and vivid impressions from

¹ Valetton, *Viertal Voorlezingen*, p. 33.

nature. His memory is stored with simple and homely pictures of rustic life, and these rise to his mind invested with a singular dignity and charm in the light of some inspiring and lofty idea. The reapers in the valley of Rephaim, and the beating of the olive trees (xvii. 5 f.), the ox and ass faithful to their master's stable (i. 3), the lion growling over his prey and defying the *posse* of shepherds gathered against him (xxxi. 4), the subtle rent spreading downwards in the wall until it falls with a sudden and terrible crash (xxx. 13 f.), the deserted hut of the vineyard-watchers after the vintage is past (i. 8): these are some of the images which his poet's eye had gathered from scenes familiar to every native of Palestine. Nor does Isaiah's imagination fail him when he passes from the familiar to the stupendous, and calls up the destructive agencies of nature to set forth the awful terrors of the day of Jehovah. The forest conflagration (ix. 18, x. 16), the inundating flood of waters (viii. 7 f.), the thunderstorm (xxx. 30 f.), the earthquake (ii. 12 ff.) furnish him with emblems, strikingly effective, of the final catastrophe in which the existing order of things is to perish. On the other hand, there is a peculiar charm in the indistinctness of the descriptions of the latter days, where images of earthly comfort and security shade away imperceptibly into suggestions of a new creation, in which to our minds there is more of heaven than earth.

As a master of style Isaiah is supreme among the prophets; the only one with whom he can be compared being his predecessor Amos. While others seem conscious of the labour of expression, he wields the resources of the language with the ease and dexterity of a perfect artist in words. There is an astonishing directness and sureness of touch in his phrase, as of one who knows when he has hit the mark and does not need to strike a second time. The high level of literary excellence maintained in the prophecies depends largely on the fact that they faithfully preserve (though doubtless with some condensation) all the effects of the spoken word. The style is one obviously formed for the purposes of the orator, who must carry his audience with him at the moment, trusting nothing to a

sustained effort of attention on their part. Hence it is absolutely free from affectations and obscurities; and even the fondness for paronomasia which is often attributed to Isaiah is really shewn very sparingly and never without telling oratorical effect. The poetic form in which the oracles are usually cast affords no presumption against this view of their origin; for in Hebrew the formal difference between poetry and prose is much less marked than with us, and all impassioned and elevated speech readily falls into the simple rhythmic structure characteristic of Hebrew poetry. It would hardly be possible to characterize the style of Isaiah better than by the four notes under which Matthew Arnold has summed up the distinctive qualities of Homer's genius: Plainness of thought, Plainness of style, Nobleness, and Rapidity. Enough has perhaps been suggested to illustrate the aptness with which each of these terms may be applied to Isaiah. In this case, as in others, the style is the man; and in the plainness, and nobleness, and rapidity of Isaiah's recorded discourses we read the signature of the glowing and impetuous nature, the lucid intellect, and the quick decision of character which made this prophet so great a force in the history of his time.

CHAPTER V.

PROBABLE COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH— CONTENTS OF CH. I.—XXXIX.

THE book which bears the name of Isaiah is in reality a collection of prophetic oracles, shewing manifest traces of composite authorship, and having a complicated literary history behind it. Not much less than two-thirds of its bulk consists of anonymous prophecies, all of which (with the probable exception of ch. xv. f. and the possible exception of ch. ii. 1—4) are of an age long subsequent to that of Isaiah. To this class belongs first of all the whole of the latter part of the book, commencing with ch. xl., the date and authorship of which will be fully dealt with in the Introduction to the second volume of this commentary.

But even when we confine our attention to ch. i.—xxxix. we still find abundant evidences of great diversity of authorship. Excluding the narrative section (ch. xxxvi.—xxxix.) it is estimated that of the prophetic chapters (i.—xxxv.) a little over two-thirds is occupied by genuine prophecies of Isaiah. In the following synopsis, passages which are probably to be assigned to other writers than Isaiah are marked by an asterisk; for the grounds on which this conclusion rests in each case, as well as for the dates attached to the Isaianic oracles, the reader must be referred to the Introductory Notes on the several sections.

ANALYSIS OF CHAPTERS I.—XXXIX.

This first part of the Book of Isaiah naturally falls into four main divisions: (A) ch. i.—xii.; (B) ch. xiii.—xxvii.; (C) ch. xxviii.—xxxv.; (D) ch. xxxvi.—xxxix. Of these the first three must have circulated as separate books, while the last is mainly an extract from the second book of Kings.

A. Ch. i.—xii. A volume of discourses mainly (though not exclusively) concerning “Judah and Jerusalem,” as stated in the superscription (ch. i. 1). The grouping of the oracles seems to shew that the book was formed by the amalgamation of several minor collections.

i. Ch. i. is an introductory oracle setting forth the grounds of Jehovah’s controversy with Israel. Its date may be the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic war (c. 734), although the first part (*vv.* 1—17) is assigned by many critics to the time of Sennacherib (701).

ii. Ch. ii.—iv. A résumé of the very earliest discourses of Isaiah (ii. 6—iv. 1), with a prologue (ii. 2—4) and an epilogue (iv. 2—6), both of Messianic import. The new title (ii. 1) suggests that this short collection once existed separately.

iii. Ch. v. 1—24 (somewhat later than the preceding) contains the parable of the vineyard (1—7) followed by a series of woes against the prevalent sins of the upper classes (8—24).

iv. Ch. v. 25—30 is the misplaced conclusion of the oracle against Northern Israel (see vi. below).

v. Ch. vi.—ix. 7 a series of discourses written for the most part in the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitic invasion, and probably published shortly after that event. It consists of:

(1) A preface (ch. vi.), describing Isaiah's inaugural vision of God and consecration to the prophetic office.

(2) An account of the prophet's eventful interview with Ahaz, and prophecies arising out of it (ch. vii.).

(3) Further accounts of the prophet's activity during this period (ch. viii.).

(4) A prophecy of the Messianic deliverance and the coming of the Prince of Peace (ch. ix. 1—7).

vi. Ch. ix. 8—x. 4 (and v. 25—30). Announcement of the impending ruin of the kingdom of Ephraim (written perhaps before the alliance with Syria).

vii. Ch. x. 5—34. An oracle dealing with the mission and fate of Assyria. The most probable date is the beginning of the reign of Sennacherib (c. 704).

viii. Ch. xi. Two Messianic prophecies.

(1) vv. 1—9. The Messiah and his kingdom,—possibly the conclusion of ch. x.; otherwise the date is uncertain.

*(2) vv. 10—16. The Return of Exiled Israelites from all quarters of the earth.

*ix. Ch. xii. forms a lyrical epilogue to the book (A).

B. Ch. xiii.—xxvii. A series of prophecies by various authors, mostly dealing with foreign nations.

*(1) Ch. xiii.—xiv. 23. On the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (written towards the close of the Exile).

(2) Ch. xiv. 24—32. Two oracles of Isaiah's, one (apparently a fragment, vv. 24—27) announcing the destruction of Assyria, the other (vv. 28—32) directed against the Philistines. The last is dated in the year of Ahaz's death; the other probably belongs to the same time as ch. x. 5 ff.

*(3) Ch. xv., xvi. On Moab. It is probably the work of an unknown early writer, revised with a postscript (xvi. 13 f.) by Isaiah.

(4) Ch. xvii. 1—11. On the overthrow of Damascus and North Israel (written at the time of the alliance between the two powers in the reign of Ahaz).

(5) Ch. xvii. 12—14. The destruction of the Assyrians (date uncertain).

(6) Ch. xviii. The same subject, in the form of a charge to Ethiopian ambassadors (from the beginning of Sennacherib's reign).

(7) Ch. xix. On Egypt. The date cannot be determined. The last part (*vv.* 16—25) is possibly a post-exilic addition.

(8) Ch. xx. On the fate of Egypt at the hands of the Assyrians. The date is 711.

*(9) Ch. xxi. Three oracles, on Babylon (*vv.* 1—10), on Edom (*vv.* 11, 12), and Arabia (*vv.* 13—17). Probably written near the end of the Exile.

(10) Ch. xxii. 1—14. A rebuke addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the crisis of the Assyrian invasion (701).

(11) Ch. xxii. 15—25. A philippic against a high court official named Shebna; probably from the time of Isaiah's opposition to the alliance with Egypt.

(12) Ch. xxiii. On Tyre. The date is probably either in the reign of Shalmaneser (c. 727) or that of Sennacherib. The appendix (*vv.* 15—18) appears to be post-exilic.

*(13) Ch. xxiv.—xxvii. A long eschatological prophecy of the world-judgment and the blessedness of Israel lying beyond it. The date is much disputed, but on the whole the most probable view seems to be that it belongs to the 4th century B.C.

C. Ch. xxviii.—xxxv. A collection of oracles issued (so far as they are Isaianic) during the invasion of Sennacherib.

i. Ch. xxviii. consists of three sections :

(1) *vv.* 1—6. Announcement of the fall of Samaria (written therefore before 722, but probably republished as a preface to this group).

(2) *vv.* 7—22. An encounter between Isaiah and the dissolute courtiers of Jerusalem, with related oracles.

(3) *vv.* 23—29. A parable of Jehovah's providential dealings with Israel.

ii. Ch. xxix. contains

(1) A prediction of the humiliation and ultimate deliverance of Jerusalem (*vv.* 1—8).

(2) A rebuke of the spiritual blindness and hardness of the people (*vv.* 9—14).

(3) An allusion to the conspiracy with Egypt, passing abruptly into a description of the ideal future age (*vv.* 15—24).

iii. Ch. xxx. consists of four sections :

(1) A woe against the promoters of the Egyptian alliance (*vv.* 1—7).

(2) Isaiah's written protest against this step and the irreligious state of mind from which it proceeds (*vv.* 8—17).

(3) A picture of the Messianic age (*vv.* 18—26).

(4) A judgment scene on the Assyrian king and army (*vv.* 27—33).

iv. Ch. xxxi. A renewed denunciation of the Egyptian treaty (*vv.* 1—4); followed by a promise of mercy to Israel and a threat against Assyria (*vv.* 5—9).

v. Ch. xxxii. 1—8. A picture of the ideal commonwealth of the Messianic age.

vi. Ch. xxxii. 9—20. A censure of the careless demeanour of the women of Jerusalem (*vv.* 9—14); passing again into a picture of the blessedness of the future (*vv.* 15—20).

*vii. Ch. xxxiii. A woe against an unnamed oppressor, the writer rising, through prayer, to the anticipation of the glories of the perfect kingdom of God.

*viii. Ch. xxxiv., xxxv. A prophecy of vengeance on Edom and of the future blessedness of Israel. (l'ost-exilic.)

D. *Ch. xxxvi.—xxxix. A historical section, narrating :

(1) Sennacherib's demand for the surrender of Jerusalem (ch. xxxvi. f.).

(2) Hezekiah's sickness and cure (ch. xxxviii.).

(3) The embassy of Merodach-baladan (ch. xxxix.).

If we compare this analysis with the sketch of Isaiah's career given above (pp. xxv ff.) it is at once obvious that the book as a whole shews no consistent attempt at chronological arrangement. Not only are the anonymous prophecies interspersed amongst those of Isaiah, but even the genuine discourses of Isaiah stand in an entirely different order from that in which they were uttered. We observe further that the Isaianic material is unequally distributed over the principal divisions of the book. While A and C are in the main homogeneous (the anonymous passages occurring only at the end, where we might

expect them¹), in B the Isaianic oracles are scattered indiscriminately through the collection and occupy a much smaller proportion of the whole. These facts, together with the obviously composite structure of A point irresistibly to the conclusion that the book of Isaiah has reached its present form through protracted editorial processes, the details of which we can never hope to trace.

In explanation of this somewhat surprising result of criticism it may be desirable to call attention to a general characteristic of prophecy which ought here to be kept in mind. The prophets (at least the pre-exilic prophets) were in the first instance not writers of books but public orators and statesmen. While they availed themselves of literature as a means of preserving the substance of their teaching, they relied chiefly on the immediate effect of their spoken words; and the methods by which their discourses were reduced to writing naturally varied with different prophets, or even with the same prophet at different times. In some cases little more than rough notes of the speeches might be preserved, in others they must have been carefully worked up into finished artistic compositions. Whether a particular prophet was ever led to prepare a complete edition of his prophecies depended on the exigencies of his individual position. In the case of Jeremiah we have an instructive account of the circumstances in which, under special divine direction, he addressed himself to this task (ch. xxxvi.); and the volume then written doubtless formed the basis of all subsequent editions of the book of Jeremiah. Nothing exactly similar to this is recorded of Isaiah; but he appears to have followed the practice of issuing carefully written digests of his oral teaching at important junctures of his ministry. These separate rolls, and perhaps other prophecies which he had never given to the public at all, were probably treasured by his

¹ It is right to state, however, that several other passages in C are denied to Isaiah by a considerable number of recent critics: especially xxx. 27—33, xxxii. 1—8 and 9—20. Some even have gone so far as to dispute the genuineness of *all* the promises of salvation found in this section.

disciples and handed down to subsequent generations, until they ultimately found a place in one or other of the collections of which the present book is composed.

Of these aggregates the most interesting and the most complex is the first (A, ch. i.—xii.). The nucleus of the collection was probably the important volume written by Isaiah at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war (see above p. xxxi); including originally perhaps ch. vi.—viii. 18, to which viii. 19—ix. 7 was added as a supplement. To this two earlier rolls (ii.—iv. and v.) were prefixed, for chronological reasons; the displacement of v. 25—30 was probably accidental and must have taken place while the oracles were still detached. The great oracle on North Israel (also of early date) was placed where it stands because it does not bear on the destiny of Judah; and it is naturally followed by the prophecy on Assyria (x. 5—34), to which the Messianic passage ch. xi. 1—9 may have already been attached. Ch. i. owes its position to its comprehensive character, and its obvious suitability to form an introduction to any volume of Isaiah's prophecies. Thus far the collection might have been completed not long after the death of Isaiah; but the addition of the late passages xi. 10—xii. 6 appears to indicate that the volume existed separately till a time subsequent to the Exile.

The third collection (C, ch. xxviii.—xxxv.) must have had a history somewhat similar, though less intricate. It probably originated with what Isaiah is recorded to have written when he retired defeated from the contest with the Egyptian party at court (see above, p. xxxviii). How many of the present prophecies were included in this publication cannot of course be determined with certainty; but it doubtless contained all those referring to the Egyptian alliance, and therefore most of what we now read in ch. xxviii.—xxxi. Ch. xxxii. may have been added afterwards, and ch. xxxiii.—xxxv. belong in all likelihood to the post-exilic age.

The intermediate collection (B, ch. xiii.—xxvii.) is of a different character. It is a series of miscellaneous oracles, most of them furnished with specific headings, in which the word

massa (A.V. "burden") regularly occurs—a term found nowhere else in the book except in ch. xxx. 6¹. There is, indeed, no reason to suppose that in the intention of the compiler it was restricted to prophecies of Isaiah, although the fact that the first happened to bear his name naturally caused the whole to be attributed to him. Since with one exception (ch. xv. f.) the non-Isaianic passages are of exilic or post-exilic date, the collection cannot have been formed till a late period. It is not quite certain that the long apocalyptic prophecy of ch. xxiv.—xxvii. belonged to this group, although its position, at the close of a cycle of oracles dealing with the heathen world is somewhat in favour of this hypothesis. If so, the book must have been distinct from A and C down to a very late date, for if the three had been amalgamated, ch. xxiv. ff. would have found its appropriate place at the close, alongside of xxxiv. f.

The historical section (D) may be assumed to have been added as an appendix to the other three after they had been united. Thus for the first time all the scattered remains of Isaiah's work were brought within the compass of a single volume, which must again have for a time had a separate existence, until finally it was combined with the great prophecy of ch. xl.—lxvi.

An inferior limit for the redaction of the book of Isaiah is furnished by the work of Jesus the son of Sirach, written as is generally supposed about 200 B.C. In Ecclus. xlviii. 23—25 we read that "in his (Isaiah's) days the sun went backward and he added life to the king. He saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last; and he comforted them that mourned in Zion. He shewed the things that should be to the end of time, and the hidden things or ever they came." These references appear to imply that the writer read Isa. xxxvi.—xxxix. and xl.—lxvi. as parts of one book; and as ch. xxxvi.—xxxix. have no meaning apart from i.—xxxv., it is a tolerably

¹ The peculiar enigmatic titles of xxi. 1, 11 (? 13), xxii. 1 (xxx. 6), have been thought to point to the existence of a prior group embracing these five prophecies; but the indication is too slight to throw much light on the growth of the collection.

safe conclusion that the book of Isaiah was known in its present form in the beginning of the 2nd century B.C. Before this we have no literary evidence of the existence of the Book. Although the Chronicler (writing about a century earlier) mentions Isaiah as an author (2 Chron. xxvi. 22 ; xxxii. 32), his statements do not appear to have any reference to the book of his prophecies. It is doubtful if either passage means more than that Isaiah was regarded as the writer of the contemporary annals of the kings of Judah. But in the time of the son of Sirach the prophetic Canon was probably already completed, and the separate books of which it is composed must be at least of somewhat higher antiquity.

The canonicity of Isaiah was never questioned by the Jewish Church in later times. There is, however, a curious divergence of tradition with regard to its place amongst the prophetic scriptures. The order of the E.V., where the book stands first among the "Later Prophets" (the strictly prophetic writings) is that of all printed editions of the Hebrew Bible, as well as of the Masora and the best MSS. In the LXX. it stands first amongst the Major Prophets, but is preceded by the so-called Minor Prophets. A still more peculiar arrangement is given by the Talmudic treatise *Baba bathra* (fol. 14 b), where the order is : Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Twelve (minor) Prophets. It has been thought by some that this arrangement betrays a dim consciousness of the late authorship of the second part of the book, which is possible, although the Jewish authorities know nothing of it, and explain the traditional order by reasoning of a somewhat nebulous kind. (For full details on this subject see Ryle, *Canon of the Old Testament*, pp. 273 ff., 281 f.).

* * As the plan of this series does not admit of regular citation of authorities, a list is here given of the principal works on Isaiah consulted in the preparation of the commentary : The Commentaries of Vitringa (1724), Gesenius (1821), Hitzig (1833), Cheyne (5th Ed. 1889), Bredenkamp (1887), Delitzsch (4th Ed. 1889), Dillmann (1890), Duhm (1892). Ewald, *Propheten des Alten Bundes*, Vol. I. (2nd Ed. 1867). Strachey, *Jewish History and Politics*, &c. (2nd Ed. 1874). W. R. Smith, *The*

Prophets of Israel (1882, Revised Ed. 1895). Guthe, *Das Zukunftsbild des Jesaias* (1885). Driver, *Isaiah: his Life and Times* (2nd Ed. 1893). G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah* [Expositor's Bible], Vol. 1. (1889). Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets* (1892). Hackmann, *Die Zukunftserwartung des Jesaia* (1893). Cheyne, *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah* (1895).

NOTE ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF ISAIAH'S TIME.

It is an accepted principle amongst modern historians and critics that a true chronology of the Hebrew kingdom must be based on the synchronisms established by the Assyrian monuments. From a very early time the Assyrians followed the system of naming each year after a high official of the empire; continuous lists of these eponyms were kept and have been discovered; and in these lists (the so-called Eponym Canon) we have a complete guide to Assyrian chronology, the accuracy of which has been confirmed by every test to which it has been subjected. The Old Testament writers, on the other hand (at the time with which we are concerned), proceed on no fixed chronological system; their statements are frequently at variance with each other, and the attempt to treat them as absolute historical data often leads to inextricable confusion. In these circumstances there is no course open to us but to accept the evidence of the cuneiform inscriptions so far as it is available, and to fill in the details of the scheme as best we may. The most probable results are given in the annexed Table, where events that can be dated from Assyrian records are distinguished by italics. The figures are in some instances only approximate; and there are two dates of importance for Isaiah's biography, with regard to which it seems impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion.

(1) The first is the year of Uzziah's death, which is also the year of Isaiah's call (ch. vi. 1). From 2 Kings xv. 7 we learn that Uzziah (Azariah) was succeeded by his son Jotham, to whom a reign of 16 years is assigned (v. 33). Since we know (Is. vii. 1) that Ahaz was on the throne in 735, this appears at first sight to give, as the lowest possible date for the death of Uzziah, the year 751. But if, as is probably the case, Jotham's 16 years were reckoned from the time when he assumed the regency on account of his father's leprosy (2 Kings xv. 5), we are really left without information as to the length of his independent reign or the date of Uzziah's death. The date given in the table (740) is an

approximation merely. It cannot be brought much lower than this, because in 735 Isaiah is accompanied by a son, whose name, embodying an idea of the opening vision, shews that he must have been born after the prophet's call. Nor on the other hand can it be placed much higher without throwing the events of 701 into the extreme old age of Isaiah. The chief point that awaits elucidation is the supposed mention of Uzziah by Tiglath-pileser in 739 or 738 (see above, p. xii). If this reference should be ultimately established, the time of Isaiah's call will be settled within very narrow limits indeed.

(2) A much more intricate problem is presented by the second controverted date, that of Hezekiah's accession. The difficulty here arises from the discrepancy of the biblical data. The two chief passages are :

(a) 2 Kings xviii. 10, where the fall of Samaria (*c.* 721) is said to have taken place in the sixth year of Hezekiah ;

(b) 2 Kings xviii. 13, where the year of Sennacherib's invasion (701) is given as the fourteenth of Hezekiah.

If *a* be correct Hezekiah ascended the throne about 727, if *b* be right, about 715. The dates of the siege of Samaria and the invasion of Judah being unassailable, there is no possibility of harmonising these two statements; we must make our choice between them¹. Now, if we consider the two statements by themselves, it will certainly appear less likely that the mistake should be in *a* than in *b*. For if *a* be right, the error in *b* would be only in the numeral, whereas if *b* be right both the figures and the name of the king in *a* must be false; and it would argue an almost incredible degree of carelessness in a historian to assign so important an event as the fall of Samaria to the wrong reign. The case, however, is not quite so simple as this. The date *b* is bound up with the story of Hezekiah's sickness and the extension of his life for 15 years (2 Ki. xx. 6), and this again is closely connected with the ascription to him of a total reign of 29 years (xviii. 2). Hence a mere alteration of the numeral in *b* (say 14 into 24) would not really meet the difficulties, for the numbers 14, 15, 29 are obviously so related that we cannot challenge one of them without challenging a second. That is to say, *if* Hezekiah reigned 29 years, and *if* Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, then his 14th year *must* be the true date of his sickness; and it makes no

¹ Winckler, however (whom Cheyne seems disposed to follow), rejects both in favour of 2 Kings xvi. 2, which assigns to Ahaz a reign of 16 years. Reckoning this from *c.* 735 we get 720 as the proximate date of Hezekiah's accession. But this seems a wholly unjustifiable expedient.

difference whether the compiler got it from tradition or arrived at it by an easy calculation of his own. Now this suggests a probable explanation of the date in xviii. 13. It has been inserted by an editor who assumed that Hezekiah's sickness coincided with the time of Sennacherib's invasion, whereas in reality the events were separated by an interval of 12 years. Such a mistake was a natural inference from the juxtaposition of the two incidents in the separate source whence these narratives were transcribed first in the books of Kings (xviii. 13—xx. 19) and then in the book of Isaiah (xxxvi., xxxix.). (See Introductory Notes to these chapters.) It is not improbable indeed that in the process a transposition of the narratives was effected, Is. xxxviii. f. having originally stood before xxxvi. f. But however that may be, everything points to the conclusion that the 14th year of Hezekiah is the correct date of his sickness and Merodach-baladan's embassy, but erroneous when transferred to Sennacherib's invasion.

We are thus left with 2 Kings xviii. 10 as our surest guide to the year of Hezekiah's accession; and this is the view assumed throughout this work. It is true that it involves a shortening of the reign of Ahaz to about 8 years, and consequently a readjustment of the ages of Ahaz and Hezekiah at their accession (since the former dying at the age of 28 could not have left a son aged 25) but this causes no serious embarrassment, where numbers much more important are indubitably wrong. On general historical grounds neither date can claim to have much advantage over the other. It might be argued that the change of policy towards Assyria, first appearing in 711, would be more intelligible if coincident with a change of sovereign in 715. But there is little force in the argument; and it may be fairly balanced by the consideration that the embassy of Merodach-baladan is more likely to have taken place about 713 than shortly before 701.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE¹.

B.C.	
745.	<i>Accession of Tiglath-pileser III.</i>
740?	Death of Uzziah, Jotham sole ruler. Year of Isaiah's call.
739/8.	<i>Hamath subdued.</i>
c. 736.	Accession of Ahaz.
735.	Syro-Ephraimitic Invasion of Judah.
734.	<i>Gilad, Galilee, &c., ravaged by Assyrians; Pekah dethroned.</i>
732.	<i>Subjugation of Damascus.</i>
727.	<i>Accession of Shalmaneser IV.</i>
c. 727?	Accession of Hezekiah.
c. 727—722.	Shalmaneser blockades Tyre.
722.	<i>Accession of Sargon.</i>
722/1.	<i>Fall of Samaria.</i>
720.	<i>Sargon in Palestine: defeats Egyptians at Raphia.</i>
711.	<i>Capture of Ashdod.</i>
709.	<i>Merodach-baladan expelled from Babylon.</i>
705.	<i>Accession of Sennacherib.</i>
703.	<i>Sennacherib vanquishes Merodach-baladan.</i>
701.	<i>Invasion of Phoenicia, Philistia (battle of Eltekeh) and Judah (deliverance of Jerusalem).</i>
c. 697?	Accession of Manasseh.
681.	<i>Assassination of Sennacherib.</i>

¹ Dates established by the Assyrian monuments are indicated by italics.

THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH ARRANGED IN THE
PROBABLE ORDER OF THEIR PUBLICATION.

FIRST GROUP. Previous to the Syro-Ephraimitic War (740—735).

ch. ii.—iv., v. 1—24.

ch. ix. 8—x. 4, v. 25—30.

SECOND GROUP. During and immediately after the Syro-Ephraimitic
War (c. 734).

ch. xvii. 1—11.

ch. vi., ch. vii. f. [? ix. 1—7].

[ch. i. ?]

THIRD GROUP. During the Assyrian Suzerainty (734—705).

ch. xiv. 28—32 (c. 727).

ch. xxviii. 1—4 [6] (before 722).

ch. xx. (711).

FOURTH GROUP. During the Rebellion under Sennacherib (705—
701).

ch. x. 5—34, xiv. 24—27.

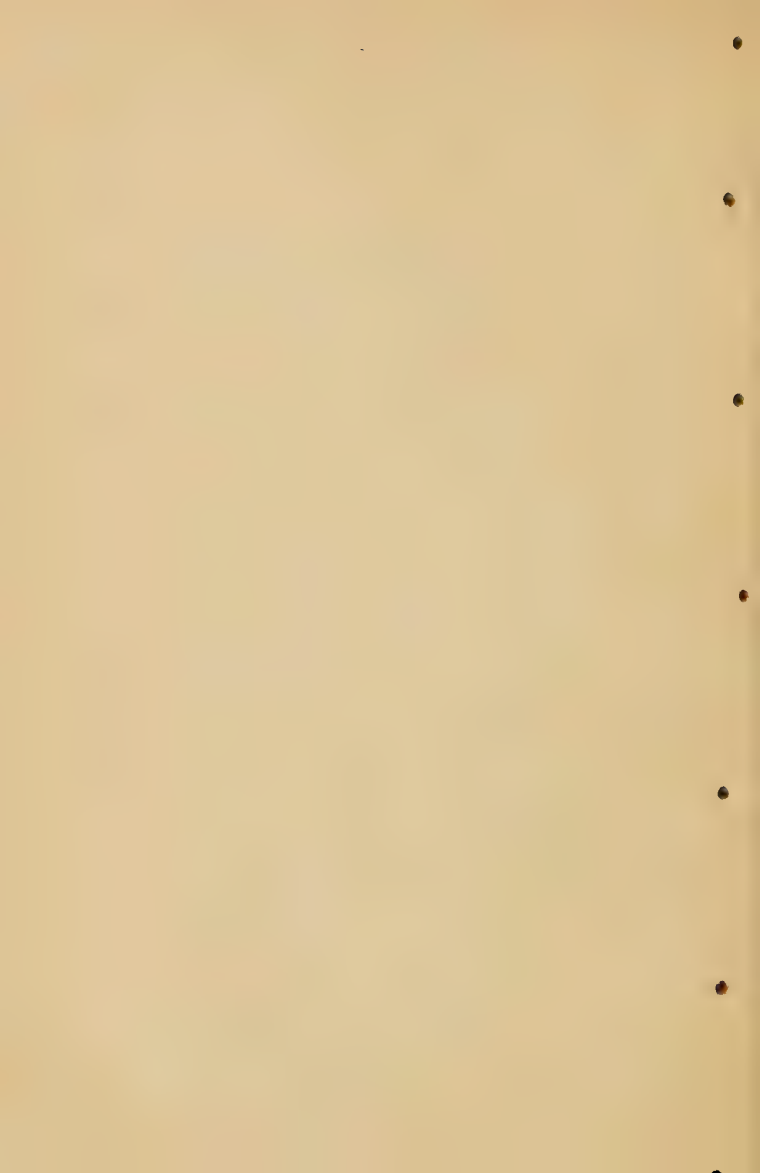
[? xvii. 12—14] xviii.

ch. xxviii.—xxxi., xxii. 15 ff.; xxxii. 9—20.

ch. xxii. 1—14.

ch. xxxvii. 22—35.

Of uncertain date: ch. xi. 1—9, xxxii. 1—8, xix., xxiii.



THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH.

THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw ¹ concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

CH. I. 1. THE SUPERScription.

The verse is probably best understood as the heading of the first great collection of prophecies, ch. i.—xii. The contents of these chapters are described with sufficient accuracy for the purposes of a title; whereas the phrase *concerning Judah and Jerusalem* is unsuitable to many of the later prophecies, and the note of time forbids us to limit the reference to ch. i. The second difficulty (but not the first) might be removed by accepting Vitringa's ingenious suggestion that the first half of the verse (down to "Jerusalem") was originally the title of ch. i., the latter part having been added in order to extend its scope to the whole book. Since, however, there is reason to suppose that ch. i.—xii. once formed a separate volume (see General Introduction, p. lxxii), it is better to adopt the view which most fully accounts for all the particulars of the superscription.

The word *vision* is used here in the wide sense of a collection of prophetic oracles (cf. Nah. i. 1; Obad. 1). As the prophet was called a "seer" (*hōzeh*), and his perception of divine truth was called "seeing," so his message as a whole is termed a "vision" (*hāzōn*). See further on ch. ii. 1, xxx. 10.

Isaiah the son of Amoz] On the name and parentage of the prophet, see General Introduction, p. xxii.

concerning Judah and Jerusalem] as distinguished from prophecies on foreign nations, ch. xiii. ff.

in the days of Uzziah... Judah] The words indicate generally the period covered by Isaiah's public ministry. The author of the title probably understood that the vision of ch. vi. took place in the lifetime of Uzziah.

It is not necessary to suppose that he assigned other prophecies to the reign of that king.

CH. I. 2—31. THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE.

The passage falls into two main divisions:—

i. vv. 2—20. The moral and religious issues involved in the great dispute between Jehovah and Israel.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth :
For the LORD hath spoken,

(1) *vv.* 2, 3. Jehovah has discovered rebellion and ingratitude in the sons whom He has reared and brought to honour. This fact, disclosed to the spiritual perception of the prophet, is the basis of the whole subsequent argument.

(2) *vv.* 4—9. The prophet, in his own name, presses home the charge of rebellion; the divine accusation being “translated into passionate invective and threatening by the prophet” (Delitzsch) (*v.* 4). The evidence of Israel’s sin is seen in the calamities of the land; why should they invite further chastisement by persistent disobedience? (5—8). It is of the Lord’s mercy that they are not utterly consumed, like the Cities of the Plain (9).

(3) *vv.* 10—17. Does Israel imagine that Jehovah can be propitiated by costly rites and offerings? Nay, the whole system of ritual worship as practised by them is an intolerable insult to Him (10—15). The prophet’s invective is aimed at a deep-seated fallacy of the popular religion. In opposition to this mistaken notion he demands moral reformation and public righteousness as the only service acceptable to God (16 f.).

(4) *vv.* 18—20. The conclusion of the argument. Jehovah summons the nation to a trial at law, and submits the alternative: prosperity as the reward of obedience, or destruction as the penalty of continued rebellion.

ii. *vv.* 21—31. The necessity for a purifying judgment. This is the prominent idea in the second division of the chapter, but the connexion of thought is less obvious than in the first. The keynote is struck in

(1) *vv.* 21—26. A dirge over the decay of civic virtue in Jerusalem (21—23), followed by a threat of judgment (24 f.), and a picture of the city restored to its pristine purity (26).

(2) *vv.* 27—31. The operation of the judgment is shewn to be two-fold: the deliverance of a converted remnant (27), and the annihilation of apostates (28). And a further consequence will be a demonstration of the vanity of nature-worship and idolatry (29—31).

The chapter, entitled by Ewald ‘The Great Arraignment,’ stands worthily as the introduction to Isaiah’s prophecies. Its leading ideas—the breach between Jehovah and Israel, the inefficacy of mere ritual, the call to national repentance, the certainty of a sweeping judgment—are those which underlie not only Isaiah’s teaching, but also that of all the pre-Exilic prophets; and these elementary principles are here presented with a force and clearness unrivalled in the Old Testament. Certain resemblances, both in thought and expression, to the ‘Song of Moses’ (Deut. xxxii.) have been noted by commentators, but the inference that this discourse is in any sense an imitation of that poem is on every ground to be rejected. The passage is probably a summary of several public discourses; these, however, have been worked up into a literary unity, and there is perhaps a presumption that the original oracles belong to one and the same period of the prophet’s activity.

I have nourished and brought up children,
And they have rebelled against me.

What that period was cannot, however, be determined with certainty. Critical opinion seems to gravitate more and more to the view that the first part of the chapter (*vv.* 2—17) belongs to the time of Sennacherib's campaign (B.C. 701). This conclusion is based chiefly on the historical allusions in *vv.* 7—9. But it is not quite clear that the expressions there used might not apply to the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion of *circa* 735; and there are one or two general considerations which plead for the earlier date. (1) A presentation of fundamental prophetic ideas so fresh and powerful as this points to the beginning rather than the close of Isaiah's career. (2) It is difficult to read *the whole chapter* in the light of Sennacherib's invasion. It would be surprising if a series of discourses uttered during that crisis should contain only a pair of doubtful indications of their historical setting. It is admitted, moreover, that the allusions to idolatry (29 ff.) are more naturally understood of the reign of Ahaz than of that of Hezekiah, and no counter argument can fairly be drawn from the assiduous worship of Jehovah referred to in 10 ff. (3) The tone and teaching of the chapter closely resemble the prophecies uttered by Isaiah in the earliest portion of his public work (*ch.* ii.—v.). On the whole it seems not improbable that the passage is a *résumé* of the principal themes of Isaiah's early ministry, compiled shortly after the attack by Rezin and Pekah (see on *ch.* vii.). Fortunately the interpretation of the chapter is but little affected by the question of its date.

2, 3. The heart-rending complaint of Jehovah.

2. *the LORD hath spoken*] The inner ear of the prophet has heard the words which follow; he will utter them in trumpet-tones which shall cause all creation to hear and shudder. The apostrophe to the *heavens* and the *earth* has probably no other force than this (*cf.* Deut. xxxii. 1; Mic. vi. 1, 2; Jer. ii. 12), although Dillmann thinks they are appealed to as witnesses of all that has passed between the Lord and His people. The dramatic conception of a formal Assize, with Heaven and Earth for Assessors, the prophet for Herald, and so on, although a favourite one with commentators, is merely fanciful, and weakens the rhetorical effect of the passage.

nourished and brought up] The two expressions may be synonymous, as in *ch.* xxiii. 4; Ezek. xxxi. 4. More probably, however, the second means "set on high [among the nations]" (*cf.* R.V. marg.).

children] *sons*; the position of the word is emphatic. (Israel, the son of Jehovah, as Ex. iv. 22 f.; Deut. xiv. 1, xxxii. 5, 6, 18; Hos. xi. 1 ff.) The "sons" are not named here, attention being concentrated on the tragic fact that He who is Lord of all should know

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child."

have rebelled] The charge of rebellion in the mouth of Isaiah (only here and *v.* 28) would include three things: (1) the sin of idolatry, (2) breaches of the moral law, (3) rejection of his own prophetic message

- 3 The ox knoweth his owner,
And the ass his master's crib:
But Israel doth not know,
My people doth not consider.
- 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,
A seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters:
They have forsaken the LORD,
They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,
They are gone away backward.
- 5 Why should ye be stricken any more?
Ye will revolt more and more:
The whole head *is* sick, and the whole heart faint.

(cf. v. 4). It is possible that the occasion of this revelation may have been some particular incident of the kind last mentioned, such as e.g. the decision of Ahaz to call in the help of Assyria (ch. vii.), or Hezekiah's treaty with Egypt in 701 (cf. ch. xxx. 9—15).

3. Israel's ingratitude is rebuked by the instinctive fidelity of the dumb animals to their human benefactors (cf. Jer. viii. 7). *Ox* and *ass* are mentioned, not as the most stupid animals, but as the only thoroughly domesticated animals of the Hebrews,—lodged probably under the same roof as their owner and his family.

4—9. The prophet speaks.

4. *seed* (i.e. race or brood, consisting) of *evildoers*] Cf. Matt. iii. 7, "brood of vipers." The indef. art. should be omitted in this clause and the preceding.

children...corrupters] better: **sons that deal corruptly** (R.V.); lit. "that corrupt [sc. their way]" as Gen. vi. 12.

provoked...unto anger] R.V., rightly, **despised**.

Holy One of Israel] i.e. "the Holy One who is Israel's God." Holiness was the aspect of the divine nature impressed on Isaiah's mind in his inaugural vision, and this phrase, common in his writings and apparently coined by him, sums up his fundamental conception of God in relation to Israel (see *Introd.*, p. lii, and on ch. vi. below).

they are gone away backward] A pregnant construction, to be rendered as in R.V.: **they are estranged [and gone] backward**. The words are wanting in the LXX.

5. *Why*] Many comm., following the Vulg., render "On what (sc. part of the body)." Their meaning is exactly expressed by the line of Ovid (cited by Gesenius), "Vix habet in vobis iam nova plaga locum." The idea seems somewhat frigid, and hardly suits the clause immediately following. The translation "why" is thoroughly established by Hebrew usage, is supported by most ancient versions, and ought probably to be retained.

the whole head...heart] Not "every head" (in spite of the absence of the Hebr. art.). The commonwealth is conceived as a body, sorely wounded and sick unto death: afterwards its calamities are described literally (v. 7).

From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* 6
no soundness in it;

But wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores:

They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither
mollified with ointment.

Your country *is* desolate,

Your cities *are* burnt *with* fire: 7

Your land, strangers devour it in your presence,

And *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a 8
vineyard,

As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,

As a besieged city.

6. The state of the nation is indeed desperate; no remedial measures have yet been applied. In the simple surgery of Isaiah's time a wound was first **pressed** (to extrude suppurating matter), then **bandaged** and **softened with oil** (cf. Luke x. 34).

7. The situation here described (which was undoubtedly *present* at the time of utterance) is that of a land ravaged by foreign troops (*land* is "cultivated land"). It has been contended that the word *strangers* (foreigners) must refer to the Assyrians, and could not be used of the allied Syrians and Ephraimites. But there seems no good reason why an army mainly composed of Syrians should not be designated as "foreigners."

and it is desolate...strangers] Lit., "and a desolation like an overthrow of strangers." If the text is sound it must mean "is such an overthrow as might be expected at the hands of strangers" (the so-called *Kaph veritatis*). This is a weak sense; and hence Ewald's plausible emendation, "like the overthrow of Sodom," has been accepted by most subsequent writers. The word for "overthrow" never occurs elsewhere except in connexion with Sodom (ch. xiii. 19; Deut. xxix. 23; Jer. xlix. 18, l. 40; Am. iv. 11).

8. *daughter of Zion*] A gen. of apposition = "the daughter, Zion." It is a personification either of the city or the population of Jerusalem, or both together. The capital is as yet spared, but its isolation in the midst of the devastated country suggests to the imagination of the prophet two homely and vivid pictures of forlorn and dreary solitariness: **like a booth in a vineyard, or a night-lodge in a cucumber field**. Such frail structures, consisting of four poles stuck in the ground, with cross-pieces supporting a couch and a slight roof or awning overhead, were erected for the watchers who guarded the fruit or crop from thieves and wild animals. (See Wetzstein's description in *Del. Comm. on Job*, Trans., vol. ii. p. 74, 2nd ed.)

as a besieged city] The exact sense is doubtful. Some render: "like a city under observation," others: "like a watch-tower."

An interesting parallel to the idea of the verse is furnished by

- 9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a
very small remnant,
We should have been as Sodom,
And we should have been like unto Gomorrah.
- 10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom;
Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Go-
morrah.

Sennacherib's boast (in 701) that he shut up Hezekiah in his capital "like a bird in a cage."

9. *the LORD of hosts*] In Hebr. *Yahveh Tsëbäôth*, a peculiarly solemn title of the God of Israel, specially common in the prophetic writings. On the different theories as to the origin of the expression, see the Note in Cheyne, *Comm.* i. pp. 11 ff. The simplest explanation of its origin is that which regards it as equivalent to "Jehovah (the God) of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. xvii. 45; cf. Ex. vii. 4). It is true that this cannot be the precise sense in which the phrase is used by the prophets, since it is a fundamental conception with them that Jehovah is no longer on the side of the hosts of Israel. But just as Amos took the phrase "day of Jehovah" from the lips of the people (see below on ii. 12), and gave it an interpretation diametrically opposed to the popular one, so he may have done also with this expression. If this be the correct view, "God of battles" may approximately reproduce the sense in which it is used by the prophets: Jehovah is still the Lord of Hosts, although He has disowned those of Israel. Or, if a vaguer idea be preferred, we may adopt the *Κύριος παντοκράτωρ* (All-sovereign Lord) of the LXX. as sufficiently expressive.

a very small remnant] The adverbial phrase "very small" might (disregarding the accents) be taken with the following clause, which would then read "we might readily have been as Sodom, &c." (as in Gen. xxvi. 10; Ps. xciv. 17, cxix. 87). The word for remnant (*sarîd*) is only here used by Isaiah. He perhaps purposely avoids *shê'ār*, which he would have used in speaking of the ideal remnant that inherits the hope of the future.

10—17. "The false and the true way of seeking God's favour" (Dillmann). The threatening aspect of public affairs had probably led to an unwonted display of zeal in the performance of the Temple ritual. Although the underlying thought of the people is that the bond between them and their God is maintained by sacrifice, &c., there is no reason to suppose that they are here conceived as consciously entering this plea in arrest of judgment. It is not till v. 18 that Jehovah calls the nation to answer His indictment.—It is to be noted that in these verses there is a progression from the cruder and more external to the more spiritual expressions of religious homage: sacrifice, solemn assemblies, prayer. This shews that what the prophet repudiates is not cultus as such, but the unholy combination of ritual worship with immoral conduct.

10. *rulers of Sodom...people of Gomorrah*] Note the singularly

To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices ¹¹
unto me? saith the LORD:

I am full *of* the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat
of fed beasts;

And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of
lambs, or of he goats.

When ye come to appear before me,

Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my ¹²
courts?

Bring no more vain oblations; incense *is* an abomina- ¹³
tion unto me;

effective transition from the last words of *v. 9*. The word for "ruler" is the same as the Arabic *kadi* (found again in *iii. 6, xxii. 3*) and means strictly "decider," i.e. judge.

law of our God] Parallel to *word of the LORD*, as in *ii. 3*. The reference is not to the Mosaic Law, but to the prophetic revelation which follows (*cf. v. 24, viii. 16, xxx. 9*). The word *Tôrâh* (primarily "direction," then "instruction" or "teaching") was perhaps originally employed of the oral directions given by the priests on points of ritual or ethics (see esp. *Hag. ii. 11; Jer. ii. 8, viii. 8, xviii. 18; Ezek. vii. 26*); but is frequently used of the prophetic teaching (*Jer. xxxi. 33; Is. xlii. 4, &c.*). It appears always to denote *religious* instruction, even in such cases as *Prov. i. 8, iii. 1, xiii. 14, &c.* Of the Mosaic Law, *Deut. i. 5, iv. 8*, and very often.

11. sacrifices] the general term for *animal* sacrifices; *burnt-offerings*, those entirely consumed on the altar; of the more ordinary kinds the deity received the *fat* and the *blood*.

I am full of] **am sated with**. The idea of sacrifice as the food of the gods seems to belong to the original conception of the rite, and lingered long in the popular consciousness even of Israel (*Ps. l. 13*). See Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 224 (Revised Ed.).

12. to appear before me] R.V. marg. (following one Hebr. MS.) suggests **to see my face**, which is grammatically easier. It is thought that here and elsewhere the traditional text has substituted the passive for the active so as to avoid the appearance of anthropomorphism. On either view the phrase is a technical one, denoting the act of worship in the sanctuary: *Ex. xxiii. 15, 17, xxxiv. 20, 23; Deut. xvi. 16, xxxi. 11; 1 Sam. i. 22*.

to tread] **Better to trample**; the idea of desecration is implied. This ending of the question seems weak: LXX. transfers the clause to the beginning of the next verse: "My courts ye shall no more trample; to bring oblations is vain, &c."

13. oblations] The word is technically used of the meal-offering, but may embrace sacrificial gifts of every description (*Gen. iv. 4*).

incense is an abomination] Or (according to the Hebrew accentuation), "it is abominable incense to me." The word "incense" meant originally the sacrificial smoke.

The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with;

It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth:

They are a trouble unto me;

I am weary to bear *them*.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you:

Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear:

Your hands are full *of* blood.

16 Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;

17 Cease to do evil; learn to do well;

Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed,

Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

new moon and sabbath (R.V.). Cf. 1 Sam. xx. 5, 24; 2 Ki. iv. 23; Am. viii. 5; Hos. ii. 11; Num. xxviii. 11, &c.; Ex. xx. 8; Gen. ii. 2, 3, &c. *assemblies* (lit. "calling together") is the word rendered "convocation" in the Pent. (see esp. Lev. xxiii.).

it is *iniquity...meeting*] Render as R.V. **I cannot away with** (endure) **iniquity and the solemn meeting** (festal gathering), i.e. the combination of the two. The construction is still harsh (but see a somewhat similar combination in 1 Sam. xv. 23). LXX. has "fasting and idleness"; apparently *çôm wê'aqlâh*. The true reading may have been *çôm wa-'âçârâh*, "fasting and solemn assembly" (Joel i. 14, ii. 15).

solemn meeting] (= "throne," Jer. ix. 2), cf. 2 Ki. x. 20; Am. v. 21; Joel i. 14. A slightly different form is used in the Law for the great gathering on the last day of the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 36; Deut. xvi. 8, &c.). The original meaning of the word is probably "tempus clausum." (See Robertson Smith, *Rel. of the Semites*, Revd. Ed. p. 456.)

14. *appointed feasts*] the stated festivals dependent on the season of the year; see Gen. i. 14. *trouble* is literally **burden**.

15. *your hands* ("spread forth" in the attitude of prayer) *are full of blood*] a symbol of cruel wrongs perpetrated or tolerated, including the guilt of actual murder (v. 21).

16, 17. In opposition to this false service of God, Jehovah calls for moral reformation and enunciates the true conditions on which the restoration of His favour depends.

17. *relieve the oppressed*] E.V. seems here to follow the LXX. The Hebrew must be translated **set right the oppressor** (R.V. marg.)—**restrain him within the bounds of justice**.

fatherless...widow] those who have no natural protectors, and are

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD :¹⁸
Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white
as snow ;

Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as
wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good¹⁹
of the land :

But if ye refuse and rebel,

Ye shall be devoured *with* the sword :

For the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

20

always exposed to wrong when the administration of justice is weak or corrupt (cf. v. 23; ch. x. 2). To defend such is specially the duty of the judge, but it is also an obligation lying on every one who has influence in the community. The prophet addresses his hearers ("rulers" and "people" v. 10) as members of the state; and his demand is that by "seeking judgment" they shall exercise the fundamental virtue of citizenship. The righteousness which he requires is social righteousness, *iustitia civilis*, a public life so ordered as to secure for each individual his personal rights. The prophets' passion for justice is always inspired by a deep sense of the value of the human personality in the sight of God.

18—20. Jehovah condescends to plead.

18. *let us reason together*] more accurately, **let us implead one another** (Acts xix. 38, A.V.). The idea is that of a legal process in which each party maintains his own case (see ch. xliii. 26). It is felt by some comm. that the legal figure is inconsistent with an absolute offer of forgiveness in the two clauses which follow. The difficulty would be obviated by the subtle and attractive rendering (proposed, but now withdrawn, by Cheyne) "let us bring our dispute to an end"; but this is unsupported by grammar or usage. The second member of each sentence might be taken as an indignant question, "If your sins are... shall they be white...?"—or as an ironical concession, "Though your sins be...let them be white...!" The idea of pardon, however, may be retained, provided it be understood as conditioned by the alternative of v. 19, 20.

scarlet and *crimson* are really synonyms for one colour, properly "crimson." The dye in question was obtained from the dried and powdered bodies of an insect (*coccus ilicis*, in Hebr. *tôla'ath shānî*= "bright worm"). There is perhaps no other instance of red used as a general symbol for sin, though white is the natural emblem of innocence (Ps. li. 7).

20. *ye shall be devoured with the sword*] "Sword" is here taken as an acc. of instrument, a construction of more than doubtful validity in Hebr. A more idiomatic rendering is : **ye shall be made to eat the sword**. An exactly similar expression is used by the Arabs, although Hebr. analogies are wanting.

- 21 How is the faithful city become a harlot !
It was full of judgment ; righteousness lodged in it ;
 But now murderers.
- 22 Thy silver is become dross,
 Thy wine mixt with water :
- 23 Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves :
 Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards :
 They judge not the fatherless,
 Neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.
- 24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the
 mighty One of Israel,

21 ff. The elegy (*qînāh*, distinguished by a peculiar rhythm and by the opening word *'ēkāh*, "how") is a frequent vehicle of prophetic utterance. This is the clearest instance in the genuine writings of Isaiah, and it is characteristic of the 'city prophet' (Cheyne), that the subject is not the nation but the idealised capital. Isaiah is in a good sense 'laudator temporis acti.' He laments the degeneracy of Jerusalem, looking back probably to the days of David, when it was the abode of judgment and righteousness.

21. *a harlot*] The idea conveyed is perhaps rather deterioration of character than infidelity to the marriage bond with Jehovah, an image not used by Isaiah (as by Hos.).

righteousness (*śēdeq*) is the principle of right action in individuals or the community ; *judgment* (*mishpāt*) the embodiment of that principle in judicial decisions, use and wont, and the like. These qualities constituted the "faithfulness," trustworthiness, of the city.

22. *silver* and *wine* may refer to the great men of the city (v. 23) but more naturally to the "judgment" and "righteousness" of v. 21 ;—all that was best in her, purity of morals, excellence of character, &c. The word for *mixt* occurs only here. The phrase is usually illustrated by the Latin "castrare vinum," the verb being taken as connected with that for "circumcise."

wine] better : **choice drink**, found elsewhere only in Hos. iv. 18.

23. *Thy princes are rebellious*] In the Heb. a paronomasia, borrowed from Hos. ix. 15. The "princes" (*śārīm*) are the civil and military officials of the monarchical constitution, as distinguished from the *zēpēnīm* (sheikhs or elders) of the old tribal system. The charge brought against them is that as a class they are corrupted by systematic bribery. They are *companions of thieves*, conniving at extortion and receiving in return a share of the spoil. Hence the *fatherless* and *widows*, having no bribes to offer, can obtain no redress ; they cannot even find access to the seat of judgment.

24. Such men are *adversaries* and *enemies* of Jehovah, thwarting His wishes and purposes for His people. *the Lord*] "the Master" or the Sovereign. The title, used absolutely as here (*hā-'Adôn*), is almost peculiar to Isaiah, and is used by him only in introducing a threat (ch. iii. 1, x. 16, 33, xix. 4 ; cf. Ex. xxiii. 17, xxxiv. 23).

Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries,
 And avenge me of mine enemies :
 And I will turn my hand upon thee, 25
 And purely purge away thy dross,
 And take away all thy tin :
 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, 26
 And thy counsellors as at the beginning :
 Afterward thou shalt be called,
 The city of righteousness, the faithful city.
 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, 27
 And her converts with righteousness.

the mighty One of Israel] **Israel's Strong One**, a rare word in Hebr., first found in Gen. xlix. 24. See on ch. x. 13. *ease me*]
 Better : **appease myself**, and so again, **avenge myself**. By a bold anthropopathy the divine Being is compared to a man thirsting for vengeance.

25 resumes the first figure of v. 22, the judgment on Zion being likened to the smelting of impure ore. *turn* (or **bring back**)

my hand] not in mercy, but, as usual, in judgment.

purely] R.V. **thoroughly**, lit. "as with lye," i.e. potash, which was used as a flux to facilitate the separation of the metals. The grammar is still suspicious. Some, by transposing two consonants, obtain the sense "in the furnace."

26. The result will be the establishment of a pure administration in Jerusalem, as in the olden time, Zion once more worthy of her ancient name, **citadel of righteousness** (Cheyne), **faithful city**. The last expression, carrying us back to v. 21, marks the close of the elegy.

Two things are noteworthy in this passage. (1) The ideal is political. The salvation of Israel is secured when all public offices are filled with good men ("judges" and "counsellors"). (2) The ideal will be realised by a restoration of the best days of the past. In later prophecies Isaiah looks forward to a state of things far transcending anything that had been achieved in Israel's previous history. Such an anticipation as this is most naturally assigned to an early period of his career, before his eschatological conceptions had assumed a definite form.

27 describes the salutary and 28 the judicial aspect of the chastisement in more abstract terms than those hitherto employed. *her converts*]
 lit. "those in her who turn"; cf. "Remnant-shall-turn" in ch. vii. 3.

redeemed] A very rare word with Isaiah (only again in xxix. 22). It is doubtful whether the meaning is that she shall be redeemed from her own sins, or from the troubles they shall have brought upon her. So it is uncertain whether *judgment* and *righteousness* (cf. v. 21) are the virtues of the redeemed people, or the attributes of God manifested in the redemption. The former idea is most in accordance with Isaiah's use of the words, but the latter, which is common in the later parts of the book, undoubtedly gives the best sense in this connexion.

- 28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the
sinners *shall be* together,
And they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.
29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have
desired,
And ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye
have chosen.
30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth,
And as a garden that hath no water.
31 And the strong shall be as tow,
And the maker of it as a spark,
And they shall both burn together, and none shall
quench *them*.

28. *And the destruction...together*] Better as an exclamation: **But destruction of rebels and sinners together!** *Rebels, sinners, forsakers of Jehovah*, as in *vv. 2—4*.

29—31. The judgment will also bring about a purification of religion, by revealing the folly of trusting in other deities than Jehovah.

29. *they shall be ashamed*] Some MSS. and Ancient Versions have the second person, possibly a mere correction.

oaks] *terebinths*. These and the *gardens* are emblems not of luxury, but of nature-worship. On “gardens” as seats of heathenish cults, see *lxv. 3, lxvi. 17*. The worship of sacred trees and sacred wells (which were probably the *numina* of the gardens [Duhm], see *v. 30*) are two of the most widely diffused and persistent forms of nature-worship, and are not extinct in Syria at the present day.

30. To the nature worshippers themselves the falling leaf of the terebinth and the failure of the spring in the garden, would mean the decay of the divine life which was supposed to animate these objects. To Isaiah, who recognises no divine life in nature but that of Jehovah, they are simply appropriate images of the collapse of superstition.

31 refers probably (though not certainly) to idolatry in the strict sense of image-worship. *the strong*] Apparently “the powerful (opulent) man.” The word occurs only once again in *Am. ii. 9*.

and the maker of it] Render with R.V. **and his work**, i.e. either “his idol,” or “his unrighteous work.”

they shall both burn...quench them] The “work” is a spark and the worker like tinder. The idea is that the product of sin will become the means of the sinner’s destruction.

CH. II.—IV.

In these three chapters we seem to have one of the minor collections of Isaianic oracles from which the present book of Isaiah has been compiled (see *Introd., p. lxvii*). That they once existed as a separate

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning 2
Judah and Jerusalem.

volume is strongly suggested by two circumstances. (a) The form of the superscription (ii. 1) as compared with that of ch. i. 1. The repetition of the full designation of the prophet, without any note of time or subject specially applicable to what follows, would seem to indicate that this heading was written independently of the general title in ch. i. (b) The artistic unity and completeness of the section as a whole confirms the impression of its original independence. It contains (1) an introduction (ii. 2—4), describing the future glory of Zion as the religious metropolis of the world; (2) a series of discourses in which the prophet assails the prevalent vices and evils of his own day, and announces the judgment about to fall on the nation (ii. 5 [6]—iv. 1); and (3) a conclusion (iv. 2—6), shewing how through judgment the ideal set forth at the outset shall be realised in the blessings reserved for those who *escape* the judgment. The enclosing of the oracles of judgment between two passages of Messianic import affords clear evidence of literary design: which is admitted even by critics who (see below) question the Isaianic authorship of the opening and closing sections.

With regard to the date little difference of opinion exists. At least the middle portion (ii. 6—iv. 1) is assigned with hardly a dissentient voice to the very earliest period of Isaiah's prophetic career. In ii. 6—22, the material prosperity attained under Uzziah still exists in undiminished splendour, and (since Isaiah did not receive his prophetic call till the year of that king's death) the passage is most naturally assigned to the succeeding reign, that of Jotham. Ch. iii. may have been written somewhat later. Its picture of anarchy may have been suggested by tendencies which Isaiah saw around him, caused by the removal of a strong hand from the helm; and (at all events *v. 12* applies to no king so well as to the weak and irresolute Ahaz.) On the other hand, the absence of any explicit allusion to the Assyrians shews that the prophecies belong to the very beginning of the reign, prior to the events recorded in ch. vii. The whole passage is thus of great importance as a record of the impressions and ideas with which Isaiah entered on public life.

II. 1. On the scope of the heading see Introd. Note above.—*The word....saw*] The combination of the verb "see" with the obj. "word" is not uncommon; Jer. xxxviii. 21; Hab. ii. 1; Am. i. 1; Mic. i. 1, and cf. Is. xiii. 1; Hab. i. 1 (*burden*). In such expressions both words have undergone a certain process of generalisation; "word" denoting the substance of the prophetic revelation, in whatever way received, and "see" (*hāzāh*) describing the spiritual intuition by which the prophet was enabled to apprehend it. (See on ch. i. 1.)

CH. II. 2—4. ZION THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION IN THE LATTER DAYS.

In this striking picture of the Messianic age the following features should be noticed:—(i) The preeminence, amongst the mountains of

- 2 And it shall come to pass in the last days,
That the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains,

the world, of Zion, the acknowledged seat of Jehovah's universal dominion (cf. Jer. iii. 17; Ps. ii. 6, cx. 2, &c., also Ez. xl. 2). (ii) The extension of the true religion is effected, not by conquest, but by the moral influence of Israel's theocratic institutions on surrounding peoples (cf. Is. lx. 3). The submission of the nations is spontaneous; they are filled with eager desire to learn the ways of Jehovah (comp. Zech. ii. 11, viii. 22). Hence (iii) the nations retain their political independence. They are not conceived as absorbed in the Jewish nationality or as incorporated in a world-empire. Jehovah, not Israel, rules the world, and He rules it by His word, not by the sword. (iv) The authority of Jehovah, appealed to in all international disputes, brings war to an end, and ushers in an era of universal peace.

The representation is ideal, yet it contains little to which the hope of the Church does not look forward as the issue of the Christian dispensation. The only traces of the limitations of the Old Testament standpoint spring from the idea of Zion as the earthly centre of Jehovah's sovereignty. Even this has been understood literally by many Christians. But it is more in accordance with the analogy of prophecy to regard it as one of those symbols of spiritual truth, which, although conceived realistically by the prophets, were destined to be fulfilled in ways that could not be perfectly revealed until the true nature of God's kingdom was disclosed by Christ.

The occurrence of this prophecy, with slight variations, in Mic. iv. 1—4, raises a difficult literary problem, for no one will now hold that the two prophets were independently inspired to utter identical words. Did Isaiah borrow from Micah or Micah from Isaiah, or both from some unknown earlier prophet? Against the first hypothesis it is pointed out that Micah's prophetic career had not begun till a time considerably later than the date of these chapters; hence if either prophet borrowed from the other the citation must be on the part of Micah. But against this it is urged that its position in Isaiah and the want of connexion with what follows mark it out as a quotation, and also that it is given by Micah in what appears to be the more original form. Hence the third alternative (originally propounded by Koppe in the last century) has been widely accepted by critics. On this view the utterance of an older prophet has been adopted by Isaiah and Micah as a "classic" and perhaps popular expression of the ideal to which they both looked forward. But a theory which is reached by a process of exhaustion cannot command much confidence, especially when the process is after all not exhaustive. The possibility of a later insertion in both places cannot be ignored, and a certain presumption in favour of Isaiah's authorship is furnished by resemblances both in matter and style to other passages in the book (xi. 1—8, xxxii. 1—8), (so Duhm). At the same time it cannot be denied that its connexion in the present passage is somewhat loose, and it must remain doubtful whether it was originally

And *shall be* exalted above the hills;
 And all nations shall flow unto it.
 And many people shall go and say,
 Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the
 LORD,

3

composed as the introduction to this group of prophecies or belongs to a later stage of Isaiah's life. The assertion that the conception presented would be unintelligible in the age of Isaiah may be disregarded. As Wellhausen remarks, the prediction is one that would be remarkable in any age; it is perhaps even less surprising from the pen of Isaiah than from that of a later prophet.

2. *And it shall come to pass*] This formula (so common in continuous discourse) nowhere else introduces a prophetic oration (Ez. xxxviii. 10 is not really an exception), and shews that the passage has been detached from its original context. *in the last days*]

Better, *in the after-days* (Cheyne) or "latter days" (R.V.), lit. "in the sequel of the days." The phrase in itself denotes simply the (remote) future, and is so used in Gen. xlix. 1; Num. xxiv. 14; Deut. iv. 30; xxxi. 29. An exact Assyrian parallel to this use (*akhrat yumi*) is given by Cheyne and Delitzsch. By the prophets the expression is often specialised in an eschatological sense, as in Hos. iii. 5; Ez. xxxviii. 16 (cf. v. 8), and probably Jer. xlviii. 47, xlix. 39, where it means (as here) the final age of the world's history following the establishment of the kingdom of God. In Jer. xxiii. 20, xxx. 24, however, the vaguer sense is more probable.

the mountain of the LORD'S house] the Temple mount, which is also the seat of the Messiah's government. The phrase occurs in the parallel passage in Micah, also in Mic. iii. 12 ("mount of the house"); 1 Macc. xvi. 20 ("mount of the temple"). In the next verse it is resolved into the two members of a parallelism: "mountain of Jehovah" and "house of the God of Jacob."

established in the top of...] Better as R.V. *at the head of...* (cf. 1 Sam. ix. 22; Am. vi. 7); although the translation "as the chief of the mountains" would also be admissible (Davidson, *Synt.* § 101 R, 1 a.). A miraculous physical elevation of Zion may possibly be thought of (Ez. xl. 2; Zech. xiv. 10); but the idea (seriously entertained by some) that Zion is to be literally set on the top of the other hills is too grotesque to be attributed to any prophet, save under compulsion. In this passage a metaphorical exaltation, in respect of political and religious importance, seems to satisfy all the requirements both of syntax and exegesis (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 15 f.).

all (the) nations shall flow] Properly "shall stream," a verb only used figuratively of the movement of masses of men to great centres of intercourse like Babylon (Jer. xxxi. 12, li. 44). Instead of "all the nations" Micah has (in harmony with vv. 3 f.) simply "peoples," which probably preserves the original text. The universality of the true religion is in either case implied; and the bare suggestion is perhaps more effective than an explicit assertion would be.

3. The conflux of nations explained by the desire, everywhere

- To the house of the God of Jacob;
 And he will teach us of his ways,
 And we will walk in his paths:
 For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
 And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
 4 And he shall judge among the nations,
 And shall rebuke many people:
 And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
 And their spears into pruninghooks:
 Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
 Neither shall they learn war any more.
- 5 O house of Jacob, come ye,

expressed, to know and practise the ways of Jehovah. Cf. Zech. viii. 20, 21. *and he will teach us...and we will walk*] Or **that He may teach us...and that we may walk**. The verb for "teach" is that from which the noun "*Tôrāh*" (i. 10) is derived; hence the instruction must be conceived as communicated through the agency of prophets like Isaiah. *of his ways*] The preposition has a partitive sense (cf. Ps. xciv. 12): "somewhat of his ways"; each people receiving such direction as is adapted to its peculiar circumstances. The "ways" and "paths" of Jehovah, denoting the revealed principles and maxims of religion and ethics, are figures too frequent in the O.T. to need detailed references.

for out of Zion...Jerusalem] These may be either words of the prophet, looking into the future, or of the peoples themselves as they exhort one another to go up to Jerusalem. In the latter case the verbs should be rendered in the present tense. *the law*] i.e. "*Tôrāh*." See on i. 10.

4. Jehovah's righteous judgment causes "wars to cease to the ends of the earth."

among the nations] Here again Micah's language is more indefinite: "many peoples"; "strong nations afar off."

rebuke] **arbitrate for**; or, as R.V. marg., "give decision concerning." Cf. Gen. xxxi. 37; Job ix. 33 ("umpire," R.V. marg.). The meaning of course is that disputes which would otherwise have been settled by the sword are referred to the just and impartial arbitrament of Jehovah, whose award is accepted as final.

they shall beat...pruninghooks] For the figure cf. Martial's "*falx ex ense*" (Ep. xiv. 34) and on the contrary Ovid (*Fast.* i. 699), "*sarcula cessabunt, versique in pila ligones*"; also Joel iii. 10. The word rendered "ploughshares" is found only in 1 Sam. xiii. 20 f. and in the parallels in Micah and Joel. Perhaps "mattock."

The cessation of war is a prominent idea in Messianic prophecy. See esp. Hos. ii. 18; Zech. ix. 10; and on Is. ix. 5 below.

And let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of
Jacob,

Because they be replenished from the east,

CH. II. 5—22. THE FALSE GLORY OF ISRAEL TO BE ANNIHILATED
BY THE GLORY OF JEHOVAH IN A DAY OF JUDGMENT.

The passage may be divided into three brief sections :—

i. (vv. 5—9). After a transition verse (5, see below), the prophet proceeds, in an impassioned appeal to Jehovah, to contrast the actual condition of His people with the ideal set forth in vv. 2—4. The city destined to be the source of light and truth to all nations is at present a receptacle for the darkest and most degrading errors of heathenism. Having surveyed the symptoms of apostasy and ungodly pride which are everywhere around him—foreign superstitions (6), display of wealth (7), confidence in military resources (7), idolatry (8)—he gives utterance to the conviction borne in upon his mind, that the sin of the nation is unpardonable (9). Then follows,

ii. (vv. 10—17). A powerful description of the physical convulsions which mark the great “Day of Jehovah.” The conception seems to combine the features of the earthquake with those of the thunderstorm; it is a judgment directed against all that is “high and lofty” (12); i.e. everything, whether in nature (13 f.) or in human civilisation (15 f.), which seems to lift its head against the majesty of Jehovah (11, 17).

iii. In vv. 18—21 the prophet returns to the subject of idolatry, describing the sudden despair and ignominious discomfiture “in that day” of all who put their trust in images. The last verse then sums up in general terms the lesson of the preceding prophecy.

5 is apparently a transition verse (cf. Mic. iv. 5), “Since this great destiny is ours, O House of Jacob, let us at least for ourselves rise to the height of our privileges. But how vain is the exhortation! (6) For Thou, Jehovah, hast rejected, &c.” Or, the prophet may be supposed to cut short abruptly a line of thought he meant to pursue, and to make a fresh start at v. 6. But neither of these views is convincing enough to remove the impression that vv. 2—4 are not the original introduction to 6 ff.

light of the LORD] Not the “light of His countenance” (as Ps. lxxxix. 15, xlv. 3), but of His Revelation (cf. Is. li. 4).

6—9. The prophet bears witness to Jehovah against Israel. It is very rarely that Isaiah thus addresses himself directly to God.

6. *Therefore thou hast forsaken*] *For thou hast rejected*—a strong word, used twice (Deut. xxxii. 15; Jer. xv. 6) of Israel’s rejection of Jehovah, more frequently as here. This “rejection” is the counterpart of the “rebellion” of ch. i. 2.

replenished from the east] An old and plausible emendation (*mqs̄m* for *mqdm*) gives the sense “filled with sorcery.” Possibly both words were written (“with sorcery from the east”), one having been dropped in copying because

- And *are* soothsayers like the Philistines,
 And they please themselves in the children of strangers.
 7 Their land also is full of silver and gold,
 Neither *is there any* end of their treasures;
 Their land is also full of horses,
 Neither *is there any* end of their chariots:
 8 Their land also is full of idols;
 They worship the work of their own hands,
That which their own fingers have made:
 9 And the mean man boweth down,

of their resemblance. "The east" would include Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, perhaps also Babylonia, "the classic land of magic."

soothsayers] It is not certain what particular form of divination is indicated by the name. Some take it as derived from the word for cloud; "cloud-compellers," i.e. rainmakers. On divination amongst "the Philistines" see 1 Sam. vi. 2; 2 Ki. i. 2.

please themselves in] Lit. **strike hands with** (R.V.), i.e. "form alliances with." The expression is not found elsewhere, and the rendering is somewhat uncertain. Dillmann thinks that "children of strangers" must mean "foreign youths," who were in request as sorcerers, but the wider sense (= "strangers," simply) seems preferable. It is probably better (with Hitzig) to read *bîdê* ("with the hands of") instead of *bēyaldê* ("with the children of"), rendering simply: "join hands with strangers."

7. *Their land also is full...* Lit. **and its** (the people's) **land has become filled** (and so throughout vv. 7, 8).

silver and gold...treasures] The wealth of the country had increased enormously through commercial activity and the control of the Red Sea traffic (2 Kings xiv. 22) in the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham. These "treasures" were partly expended in procuring "horses and chariots," as in the time of Solomon. The prophets condemn all such accumulation of earthly resources, as tending to lead the nation away from reliance on the help of Jehovah. Cf. Deut. xvii. 16, 17, xx. 1; Is. xxxi. 1; Mic. v. 10; Zech. ix. 10.

8. *idols*] Lit. "nonentities."—The word (*ʿēlîlîm*) is almost peculiar to Isaiah; and appears to contain a scornful play on the word for "gods" (*ʿēlîm*).
work of their own hands] The prophet refuses to distinguish, as a heathen might, between the false deity and his image; the latter alone has real existence. Cf. Hos. xiii. 2; Is. xl. 19 f., xli. 7; xliv. 12-20, &c.

9. *boweth down...humbleth himself*] If this be the right translation, the reference must be to the degradation of human dignity involved in idolatry and superstition, a thought not unworthy of Isaiah. It is more probable, however (see ch. v. 15), that the words refer to the judgment at hand, which is as certain as if it had already taken place. So R.V. is **bowed down...is brought low**. The verbs may be understood either in a reflexive or a passive sense.

And the great man humbleth himself;
Therefore forgive them not.

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, 10
For fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his
majesty.

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, 11
And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.
For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every 12
one *that is* proud and lofty,

mean man...great man] In the original the contrast is expressed by two words for "man," corresponding to *homo* and *vir* in Latin, *Mensch* and *Mann* in German, &c. Sometimes, as here, the distinction is emphasised so as to mark a contrast (Ps. xlix. 2).

therefore forgive them not] Or, **and thou canst** (or wilt) **not forgive them**. The verbal form employed in the Heb. (jussive) properly expresses the will or desire of the speaker (as E.V.), but in negative sentences it "sometimes expresses merely the subjective feeling and sympathy of the speaker with the act" (Davidson, *Synt.* § 128, R. 2).

10, 11. It is doubtful whether these verses should be connected with what precedes or with what follows. Each is of the nature of a refrain verse: note the resemblances in 10, 19, 21 and in 11, 17. (In the LXX. v. 10 ends with "to terrify the earth," as 19, 21.) Although no strophic arrangement can be traced, the verses obviously express the keynote of this part of the discourse.

10. *Enter into the rock*] The clefts and caverns (see vv. 19, 21) which abounded in the limestone rock of Palestine were used as natural hiding-places in time of invasion (Jud. vi. 2; 1 Sam. xiii. 6, xiv. 11). Cf. the still more impressive representation, Hos. x. 8.

11. *in that day*] The day to be now described in

12—16. The conception, although in the highest degree poetic, is not allegorical. Trees, mountains, ships, &c. are not emblems of kings, magnates, commerce and the like; the destruction of all that is imposing and sublime in nature or art is itself the concrete expression of the idea that "the LORD alone shall be exalted." The appearing of Jehovah is depicted under the imagery of the thunderstorm, an ancient symbol of the Theophany (cf. Jud. v. 4 f.; Ps. xviii. 7—14, xxix.).

12. *For the day...proud...*] Render, **For Jehovah of Hosts hath a day upon all that is proud...** (see R.V. marg.). What the prophet asserts is that there is a "day of Jehovah," in the sense in which he has to announce it. From Am. v. 18 we learn that the phrase was already familiar to the people, but was understood in a sense favourable to themselves. How they arrived at the idea is not known. Probably the word "day" was interpreted as "day of battle," Jehovah's "day" being the day of His victory over the enemies of Israel (see Robertson

And upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:

13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up,

And upon all the oaks of Bashan,

14 And upon all the high mountains,

And upon all the hills that are lifted up,

15 And upon every high tower,

And upon every fenced wall,

16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish,

And upon all pleasant pictures.

17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down,

And the haughtiness of men shall be made low:

And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks,

Smith, *Proph. of Israel*, Revd. Ed. pp. 397 f.). From the time of Amos (if not earlier) the "day of the Lord" becomes a standing designation of the prophets for the final manifestation of Jehovah to judge Israel and the world. Here it is obviously a universal judgment that is predicted.

15, 16. Works of human art are last mentioned as being nearer to the sinful pride of man, which is the ultimate cause of the judgment.

16. *ships of Tarshish*] The largest class of merchant vessels then used. They were first built by the Phœnicians for the long voyage to Tartessus (Tarshish) in Spain; but the name (like our "Indiaman") was applied to large ships whatever their destination. Since the harbour of Elath was at this time in the possession of Judah the prophet may allude to fleets sailing thence to the East in the service of Jotham. More likely, however, he is thinking of the Phœnician argosies which he had seen in the Mediterranean.

pleasant pictures] An obscure expression, found only here. The noun is thought to be derived from a verb meaning "to see," but this lends itself to a variety of senses. The rendering of A.V. seems to rest on the Vulg., "omne quod visu pulchrum est"; or perhaps like that of R.V. ("imagery") on the analogy of a cognate Heb. noun (Num. xxxiii. 52; Prov. xxv. 11); "watch-towers" (R.V. marg.) is based on the Peshito (see Cheyne, *Comm.* II. p. 137).

18—21. A special feature of the judgment will be the extinction of idolatry everywhere.

18. *And the idols...abolish*] Rather, **and as for the idols—they shall completely pass away** (cf. R.V.). If the text be right this is the sense. But the extreme shortness of the verse, together with some grammatical anomalies, suggest that the text may have suffered mutilation in the course of transmission.

19. *they shall go*] i.e., as R.V., **men shall go**.

And into the caves of the earth,
 For fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his
 majesty,
 When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.
 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and ²⁰
 his idols of gold,
 Which they made *each one* for himself to worship,
 To the moles and to the bats;
 To go into the cliffs of the rocks, ²¹
 And into the tops of the ragged rocks,
 For fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his
 majesty,
 When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.
 Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils: ²²
 For wherein is he *to be* accounted of?

holes of the rocks...earth] Better: **caves of the rocks and into the holes of the dust** (R.V. and marg.; see on v. 10 above).

to shake terribly the earth] R.V. has "to shake mightily," but the strict rendering is **to terrify the earth**: a paronomasia in Heb., easily imitated in Latin, "ut terreat terram." There is an undoubted allusion to an earthquake. Isaiah must have experienced the great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah (Am. i. 1; Zech. xiv. 5); and the deep impression made on his youthful mind furnished him with a presentiment of the terror of the great day of Jehovah.

20. An expansion of the thought of v. 18. The verse is remarkable for the absence of parallelism. *which they made each one for himself*] R.V. renders more faithfully, "which they made for him." Probably, however, the verb is an archaic singular wrongly pointed ('āsā, read 'āsav), the translation being: **which he made for himself**, cf. v. 8.

to the moles and to the bats] The sense is not doubtful, although an accidental division of the word for "moles" in the original (*lahpār-pārôth*) has misled some of the older interpreters.

21. See on vv. 10, 19. Translate: **to enter into the hollows of the rocks and clefts of the crags, &c.**

22. *whose breath...nostrils*] A translation both weak and ungrammatical, although retained in R.V. Render: **in whose nostrils is a breath**. The breath of the nostrils symbolises the divinely imparted principle of life in man (Gen. ii. 7); and the meaning of the clause is that man's life is frail and perishable as a breath (cf. Job vii. 7).

This verse is not found in the LXX., and is regarded by many as a later insertion in Isaiah's prophecy.

3

For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
Doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the
stay and the staff,

CH. III. 1—IV. 1. JUDGMENT ON THE RAPACITY AND LUXURY
OF THE UPPER CLASSES IN JUDAH.

The passage falls into two sections:—

i. vv. 1—15. A prediction of the impending dissolution of social order, due to the selfishness and tyranny of the ruling classes.

(1) Jehovah is about to remove all the existing pillars of the state, and hand over the land to the miseries of incompetent and capricious government (1—4). A state of anarchy will ensue, which will be felt to be intolerable even by those who have helped to bring it about. A graphic picture is presented of the futile efforts of the people to restore some semblance of authority (5—7).

(2) The reason of this visitation is next stated; the unblushing wickedness which prevails in the land has provoked the “eyes of Jehovah’s glory,” the chief guilt lying at the door of the court and the nobles (8—12). The section closes with a vision of judgment; Jehovah appears in person and sternly calls the authorities of His people to account for their abuse of the trust committed to them (13—15).

ii. iii. 16—iv. 1. The second section, which is perhaps somewhat fragmentary, is devoted to the fashionable women of the capital. It contains:—

(1) A diatribe against the frivolity and extravagance of the ladies of Jerusalem, combined with a threat of the degradation in store for them (16—24).

(2) A picture of the desolation of the city, bereft of her defenders, who have fallen in war (25, 26).

(3) A description of the effect of this disaster on the surviving women, who in the depletion of the male population will scarcely find husbands to take away their reproach (iv. 1).

Throughout the passage the prophet’s point of view is somewhat different from that occupied in ch. ii. 6 ff. There it is the religious aspect of the people’s sin that is emphasised: pride, idolatry, and reliance on worldly power; here it is dealt with in its social aspect, as misgovernment, cruelty, luxury, &c. Again, the judgment in ch. ii. is represented as an overpowering physical catastrophe; here it is conceived as a destruction of the invisible bonds of society and a setting loose of the unruly passions of men to prey upon each other. This vivid apprehension of the evils of anarchy is instructive as the earliest indication of the statesmanlike quality of Isaiah’s genius, and his profound sense of the value of good government as the primary condition of national well-being.

1 ff. The collapse of the social fabric is to be brought about by the removal of the classes that contribute to the order and stability of the state. The state of things described might be the effect either of war and captivity (cf. 2 Ki. xxiv. 14; Jer. xxiv. 1; xxix. 1) or of a political revolution. The former view is the more natural, but it should be

The whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,
 The mighty *man*, and the man of war, 2
 The judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the
 ancient,
 The captain of fifty, and the honourable *man*, 3
 And the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the
 eloquent orator.
 And I will give children *to be* their princes, 4
 And babes shall rule over them.

noted that in ch. ix. 8 ff. (addressed to North Israel, and nearly contemporary with this) a period of revolutionary anarchy *precedes* the crowning disaster of the Assyrian invasion.

1. *the Lord, the LORD of hosts*] as in i. 24 : **the Sovereign, Jehovah of Hosts.**

the stay and the staff] The second word is the fem. form of the first. The conjunction of similar-sounding words (like "bag and baggage" in English) frequently expresses exhaustiveness. The meaning is simply "every kind of prop." Cf. Nah. ii. 10; Zeph. i. 15.

the whole stay...water] This explanation is exceedingly unnatural in view of the enumeration which follows. The clause is probably a marginal gloss (readily suggested by such passages as Lev. xxvi. 26; Ez. iv. 16; Ps. cv. 16) which has crept into the text.

2, 3. A list of the officials and prominent persons who form the "props" of society. No clear principle of arrangement can be traced, although the titles tend to fall into pairs, and those in v. 3 are perhaps of less distinction than those in v. 2. The art. is better omitted throughout as in Heb.

2. *The mighty man, and the man of war*] **Hero and man of war.** The profession of arms naturally stands first, Judah being still a military power of some pretensions. In ancient times, moreover, civil and military leadership were hardly separate.

The *prophet* is the professional prophet, scarcely distinguishable from the *diviner* (wrongly rendered *prudent* in A.V.), with whom he is bracketed. The word for *ancient* is that usually translated **elder**.

3. *honourable man*] lit. "man of respect"; either one high in the king's favour (2 Ki. v. 1) or a man of good social standing, without official rank (Job xxii. 8).

cunning artificer] lit. "skilled in arts." It is disputed whether the arts in question are mechanical or magical; hence the alternative "charmer" in R.V. marg. At all events
eloquent orator should be **skilful enchanter** (R.V.).

4. The supreme power passing into the hands of weaklings, a Reign of Terror ensues among the people. The sudden change of speaker is very striking.

and babes...] Rather, **and Outrage shall rule over them.** The word rendered "babes" is really an abstract noun, occurring again only in ch. lxvi. 4 (A.V. "delusions"). It is derived from a verb

- 5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour:
The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient,
And the base against the honourable.
- 6 When a man shall take hold of his brother *of* the house of his father, *saying*,
Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler,
And *let* this ruin *be* under thy hand:
- 7 In that day shall he swear, saying,
I will not be a healer;
For in my house *is* neither bread nor clothing:
Make me not a ruler of the people.
- 8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen:
Because their tongue and their doings *are* against the LORD,

meaning "to outrage" or "to insult" (see Jud. xix. 25; 1 Sam. xxxi. 4; Jer. xxxviii. 19; Num. xxii. 29), and seems here to denote those personal affronts and outrages which invariably accompany social confusions. The rendering "capriciousness," preferred by many, does not suit lxvi. 4. Some take the word as adverbial acc. (see R.V. marg. "with childishness shall they rule"), others think the abstract is used for the concrete ("capricious youths"). But the translation given is perhaps the most forcible,—Outrage instead of Justice.

5. A general description of the state of anarchy; "the bonds of discipline and order are loosed, all authority disappears" (Dillmann).

6, 7. Frantic but unsuccessful efforts will be made to induce some one to undertake the task of maintaining order. *v.* 6 is the protasis, *v.* 7 the apodosis. Render: **When one man lays hold of another in his father's house:** "Thou hast a cloak, thou shalt be a ruler for us," &c. It is the election of a local justice (*kadi* ch. i. 10), not of a king or dictator, which is described; "not an isolated, but a frequently observed circumstance" (Cheyne). The choice of the people falls on a landed proprietor who has been fortunate enough to retain his ancestral estate (his "father's house"), and whose outer garment is a sufficient badge of respectability. On *ruler* see i. 10.

7. *swear*] better, **protest**, lit. "lift up (sc. his voice)."
healer] lit. "binder-up" (of the wounds of the state), see i. 6.
in my house...clothing] "I am as poor as any of you."

8, 9. The ruin so vividly depicted is to the prophet's mind as certain as if it had been already accomplished, because the moral condition of the country, and especially of its present rulers, is one that Jehovah cannot tolerate. The perfects in *v.* 8 are those of prophetic certainty.

8. *Jerusalem is ruined*] A reference to the "ruin," *v.* 6.
their tongue and their doings] In word and deed they defy Jehovah

To provoke the eyes of his glory.

The shew of their countenance doth witness against 9
them;

And they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide *it* not.
Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto
themselves.

Say ye *to* the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*: 10
For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.

Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be ill with him*: 11

For the reward of his hands shall be given him.

As for my people, children are their oppressors, 12

And women rule over them.

O my people, they which lead thee cause *thee* to err,

and *provoke the eyes of His glory*. Cf. Hab. i. 13, "of too pure eyes to behold evil."

9. *The shew of their countenance*] The safest translation is that of R.V. marg., **their respecting of persons**, i.e. their partiality in judgment. The familiar phrase "respect persons" (see Deut. i. 17, &c.) appears here in the nominal form, the usual infinitive being replaced by a verbal noun. It is not an objection to this view that such a charge only applies to a particular class. The prophet deals with the nation throughout as a political unity, and he knows that the whole people must suffer for the sins of the rulers.

they declare...hide it not] or, **they declare their sin, like Sodom, undisguisedly**. On the construction see Davidson, *Synt.* § 41, R. 3.

Woe unto their soul.....] or, **Woe to themselves for they have done themselves evil**. The injustice they have done to others witnesses against them and recoils on their own heads.

10, 11. The exclamation at the end of v. 9 leads to a statement of the universal law of divine retribution. The verses are thought by some to be interpolated, and even Dillmann admits that they fit but loosely into the context.

10. *Say ye to the righteous*] R.V. "say ye of the righteous." But with a slight change in the consonantal text we may read **Happy is the righteous! for it is well [with him]**. The Heb. would then present an exact parallel to the beginning of the next verse.

12. The threat of v. 4 is already on the way to be fulfilled; the conditions of anarchy are present in the childish character of the reigning monarch, Ahaz. Cf. Eccl. x. 16. The prophet's pity for the nation breaks out in the repeated exclamation, "**My people!**"

children are their oppressors, &c.] Rather, **his tyrant** (plural of majesty) **is a child and women rule over him** (i.e. the people): the queen-mother and women of the harem attain an undue and dangerous influence under such a régime.

they which lead thee cause thee to err] **thy leaders are misleaders,**

And destroy the way of thy paths.

- 13 The LORD standeth *up* to plead,
And standeth to judge the people.
- 14 The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients
of his people, and the princes thereof:
For ye have eaten up the vineyard;
The spoil of the poor *is* in your houses.
- 15 What mean ye *that* ye beat my people to pieces,
And grind the faces of the poor?
Saith the Lord GOD of hosts.
- 16 Moreover the LORD saith,

an expression found again in ix. 16. The word for "lead" is that used in i. 17, "set right."

destroy] **have swallowed up**; according to others: "have confused." The meaning is that the landmarks of national righteousness have been effaced from the minds of the people by the conduct of its statesmen and guides.

13—15. A judgment scene, somewhat loosely connected with what has gone before, but expressing in another form the same sympathy with the oppressed which appears in v. 12. Jehovah, at once accuser and judge, comes to vindicate the cause of the poor against their oppressors.

13. The verse reads: **Jehovah has stationed himself to plead, and is standing to judge peoples.** Instead of "peoples" LXX. reads "his people" (cf. Deut. xxxii. 36), which is easier, since there is nothing to indicate that a world-judgment is contemplated. It is doubtful whether the word can denote the separate tribes of Israel. If the Heb. text be retained, the idea must be that of a general assize, in which Israel is judged first.

14. Those immediately arraigned are the "elders and princes," the authorities responsible for the national welfare.

for ye have eaten up] Rather, **And you—ye have eaten up.** The indignant remonstrance of Jehovah commences at this point. The image of the vineyard is fully explained in ch. v. 1—7. The point of the accusation here is that those who should have kept the vineyard from the intrusion of wild beasts have themselves devoured it.

the spoil...houses] the evidence of their sin.

15. The strongest metaphors are used to express the cruelty with which the poor are treated.

What mean ye that ye crush my people (Prov. xxii. 22), **and grind the face of the afflicted** as between two millstones, determined to wring the uttermost farthing from them. The expression does not occur elsewhere, but in its fierce energy it may be compared with Mic. iii. 2 and Am. ii. 7.

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
 And walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes,
 Walking and mincing *as* they go,
 And making a tinkling with their feet:
 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of ¹⁷
 the head of the daughters of Zion,
 And the LORD will discover their secret parts.
 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of ¹⁸
their tinkling ornaments *about their feet*,
 And *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon,
 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, ¹⁹
 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the ²⁰
 headbands,

16—iv. 1. An oracle addressed to the women of Jerusalem. Like Amos (iv. 1—3) in Samaria, Isaiah sees in the luxury of these pampered ladies a measure of the extortions practised by their husbands (cf. also ch. xxxii. 9—12).

16, 17 are connected as protasis and apodosis.

16. *daughters of Zion*] The “haughtiness” of the daughters of Zion is displayed in their gestures as they walk abroad. They *walk with outstretched neck, and ogling with their eyes; tripping along they go, and tinkling with their feet*. The reference in the last words is to the jingling sound of the anklets (v. 18) and the short chain uniting them (v. 20); the latter also produced the tripping gait mentioned in the previous clause.

17. *smite with a scab*] In Heb. a single verb formed from the noun found in Lev. xiii. 2, 6 ff. (the law of leprosy).

18—23. A long and obscure inventory of articles of feminine attire, occurring “in a profusion which it is difficult to represent” (Cheyne). It is reassuring to be reminded by Dillmann that all these things (21 in number) were not necessarily worn at one time. It should also be noted that many of the ornaments specified were used as charms, as is the case with Eastern ornaments to the present day.

18. *tinkling ornaments about their feet*] *anklets*, see on v. 16, where the verb “tinkling” is a denominative from this word. *cauls...round tires like the moon*] Probably *the little suns* (others, “wreaths”) and *the little moons* (Jud. viii. 21, 26, R.V. “ornaments”). Both articles are said to be still worn by Arab women.

19. *The ear-drops* (Jud. viii. 26, R.V. “collars”) and *the arm-chains and the veils*—the last (the Arabian *raʿl*) is in two parts, one thrown back over the head from above the eyes, the other hanging down over the face.

20. *The tiaras* (Ex. xxxix. 28; Ez. xxiv. 17; Is. lxi. 3, 10 [R.V.]) and *the foot-chains* (see on v. 16; others, “bracelets,” as in 2 Sam. i. 10, a slightly different word), and *the girdles and the scent-bottles, and the amulets*.

- And the tablets, and the earrings,
 21 The rings, and nose jewels,
 22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles,
 And the wimples, and the crimping pins,
 23 The glasses, and the fine linen,
 And the hoods, and the veils.
 24 And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell
 there shall be stink;
 And instead of a girdle a rent;
 And instead of well set hair baldness;
 And instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth;
 And burning instead of beauty.
 25 Thy men shall fall by the sword,
 And thy mighty in the war.
 26 And her gates shall lament and mourn;
 And she *being* desolate shall sit upon the ground.
- 4 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one
 man, saying,

21. *rings*] seal-rings, worn on the finger.

nose jewels] Gen. xxiv. 47.

22. The festal garments (Zech. iii. 4) and the tunics and the
 shawls (Ruth iii. 15) and the purses (2 Ki. v. 23).

23. The mirrors (made of polished metal, see ch. viii. 1) and the
 shifts (Jud. xiv. 12 f.) and the turbans and the overalls (a kind of
 veil, Cant. v. 7).

24. A description of the degradation of the high-born women of
 Jerusalem, reduced to beggary and slavery. The verse would appear to
 connect better with v. 17 than with 18—23.

instead of...stink] R.V. instead of sweet spices (lit. "balsam")
 there shall be rottenness. *a rent*] Render with R.V. a rope.

well set hair] artificial curls (Cheyne), lit. "turner's work."

baldness] the result of disease, v. 17, or, possibly, a sign of mourning.

a stomacher] an obscure word; perhaps mantle.

branding instead of beauty; branding the symbol of slavery.

25, 26. A poetic personification of Jerusalem, the mother city,
 mourning the loss of her sons and defenders.

25. The words for "men" and "mighty" (lit. "might") are
 poetical terms.

26. *her gates*] the places of rendezvous in Eastern cities. *lament
 and mourn*] because they are now deserted. Cf. Lam. i. 4; Jer. xiv. 2.
and she, emptied, shall sit upon the ground] Cf. ch. xlvii. 1; Lam.
 ii. 10; Job ii. 13.

IV. 1. "A companion picture to iii. 6...the male population are in

We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel:
Only let us be called by thy name,
To take away our reproach.

search of a ruler; the women in search of a husband" (Weir, quoted by Cheyne). The verse, therefore, represents an episode in that scene of anarchy which has been the main burden of this prophecy.

let us be called...] **let thy name be named over us.** The wife bore the husband's name, but only, it would seem, in such designations as "Sarai, Abram's wife," Gen. xvi. 1, &c.

to take away...] **take thou away our reproach** (R.V.). The disgrace of being unmarried is meant (Jud. xi. 37 f.).

Grotius cites a touching parallel from Lucan (*Pharsal.* II. 342):—

da tantum nomen inane
Connubii: liceat tumulo scripsisse, Catonis
Marcia.

2—6. THE FINAL STATE OF ZION AND THE REDEEMED ISRAEL.

Beyond the great judgment there is revealed to the prophet a vision of the ideal religious community, blessed with an exuberant supernatural fertility imparted to the soil (*v.* 2), purified from sin (*vv.* 3, 4), and overshadowed by the protecting presence of Jehovah (*vv.* 5, 6). It is a picture of the glorious Messianic age which immediately follows the day of the Lord. Those who inherit its glories are the survivors of the catastrophe (*vv.* 2, 3). Although the section has no definite historical background, it is obviously written as the sequel to ch. ii. iii.; the allusion to the "daughters of Zion" (*v.* 4) would scarcely be intelligible apart from iii. 16 ff., and possibly the glory of nature mentioned in *v.* 2 may form an antithesis to the artificial glories of civilisation in ii. 7 ff. (At the same time it is reasonable to suppose that the verses have only a literary connexion with the preceding oracles, and formed no part of Isaiah's spoken message in the time of Ahaz.)

By some recent critics (Duhm, Hackmann, Cheyne) the passage is assigned to a later editor of Isaiah's prophecies, and even so cautious a scholar as Dillmann hesitates with regard to the last two verses. The objections are based chiefly on considerations of style, and on the alleged post-Exilic character of the ideas and the symbolism. It is true that some leading words (such as those rendered "branch," "create," "defence," "covert") do not occur elsewhere in genuine writings of Isaiah. The imagery also is of a more pronounced apocalyptic cast than we might expect from Isaiah, and the style seems somewhat laboured and cumbersome. But on the other hand the main ideas—the salvation of a remnant, purification through judgment, the regeneration of nature—can all be paralleled from Isaiah, and this fact must be allowed some weight in favour of his authorship.

2. The luxuriant vegetation of the Holy Land in the latter days will reflect glory on the inhabitants as a proof of Jehovah's signal favour—a frequent thought in Messianic prophecy: Am. ix. 13; Hos. ii. 21 f.;

- 2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful
and glorious,
And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and comely
For them that are escaped of Israel.
- 3 And it shall come to pass, *that* he that is left in Zion,
And he that remaineth in Jerusalem,
Shall be called holy,
Even every one that is written among the living in
Jerusalem :
- 4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of
the daughters of Zion,

Is. xxx. 23; Jer. xxxi. 12; Ez. xxxiv. 26—30, xxxvi. 34 f.; Zech. ix. 16 f.; Mal. iii. 12; Joel iii. 18; and cf. Lev. xxvi. 3—5; Deut. xxviii. 3—5, 10—12. The verse has a close resemblance to ch. xxviii. 5.

the branch of the LORD] better, **the growth of Jehovah**, that which Jehovah causes to grow. The word occurs in the same sense in Gen. xix. 25 (A.V. "that which grew") and Is. lxi. 11 ("bud"). It stands in parallelism with **the fruit of the land** (not *earth*) in the next clause, and both expressions are to be understood quite literally. The reference to a personal Messiah is thus excluded by the context; for few will be prepared to apply *both* expressions to Christ, the former to His divine sonship and the latter to His human birth (although this view is defended by Delitzsch on the analogy of Ez. xvii. 5). It is true that *afterwards* the Heb. word for "growth" (*ḡemah*) came to be used as a title of the Messiah (Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12), but this usage rests on Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15, where the Messiah is described as a scion (*ḡemah*) of the Davidic house. Observe that it is an entirely different word which is translated "Branch" in Is. xi. 1.

beautiful and glorious . . . excellent and comely] better, **for beauty and glory . . . for a pride and a renown.**

to the escaped of Israel] those who have been spared in the day of the Lord's anger. Cf. ch. x. 20, xxxvii. 31.

3. The character of the escaped remnant. They *shall be called holy* ch. lx. 14, lxi. 6, lxii. 12. "Holiness" here includes the ideas of consecration to God, and inviolability (Jer. ii. 3) as well as of moral purity (v. 4).

written among the living] rather, **written for life**, i.e. not any chance survivor, but those who are predestined to life (cf. Acts xiii. 48). The figure is derived from the burgess rolls in which the name of every qualified citizen was to be found (cf. Neh. vii. 64); hence comes the idea of the "book of life" containing the names of all the true people of God; Ex. xxxii. 32 f.; Ps. lxix. 28; Dan. xii. 1; Lk. x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5, xiii. 8, xx. 12, 15, xxii. 19 (and cf. "bundle of life," 1 Sam. xxv. 29). The transition from the secular to the religious sense may be seen in Ez. xiii. 9.

4. If (*once*) **Jehovah have washed**, &c. Although the order is

And shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from
the midst thereof
By the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.
And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place
of mount Zion,
And upon her assemblies,
A cloud and smoke by day,
And the shining of a flaming fire by night:
For upon all the glory *shall be* a defence.
And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the
daytime from the heat,
And for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm
and from rain.

unusual this verse must be taken as a conditional sentence depending on v. 3. *spirit of burning*] better, **spirit of extermination** (as in vi. 13; 1 Ki. xxii. 46, &c.). The medium of the judgment is the "Spirit," the divine energy, which is operative alike in the physical and in the moral sphere (cf. ch. xxxii. 15).

5, 6. The gracious presence of God becomes a visible fact to men's eyes, in the cloud of fire and smoke which overshadows and protects the new Jerusalem. The symbolism is drawn from the story of the Exodus and the tabernacle in the desert (Ex. xiii. 21 f., xl. 34—38, &c.).

5. *upon every dwelling place...*] rather, **over the whole (divine) habitation of Mount Zion**. The word is never used of *human* dwellings. It might be translated, "foundation"; in either case it is equivalent to "sanctuary."

her assemblies] **convocations**, worshipping assemblies, as in i. 13.

a cloud...night] better (disregarding the accents), **a cloud by day and smoke with the shining of a flaming fire by night**.

for upon all the glory...defence] A perplexing clause. A literal translation would be **for over every glory (should be) a canopy**. So rendered, the words express a general principle of ceremonial propriety: wherever there is "a glory" (as e.g. royal majesty), it must be provided with a suitable canopy. The clause may be a marginal gloss suggested to a reader by the first part of the verse. The word for "canopy" occurs only in Ps. xix. 5; Joel ii. 16 in the sense of "nuptial pavilion" (see Robertson Smith, *Marriage and Kinship in Early Arabia*, pp. 168 f.). In post-biblical Hebrew it means (as here) "canopy" in general.

6. *a tabernacle*] **a pavilion** as in Ps. xviii. 11.

in the daytime] is omitted by the LXX.

for a place of refuge...rain] **for a refuge and shelter from storm and from rain**. The mention of these "lesser inconveniences" reads like an anticlimax. It is certainly difficult to think that Isaiah would have written so weak a conclusion to an important oracle. The passage may be fragmentary.

- 5 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.

CH. V.

The chapter consists of three parts:—

i. *vv.* 1—7. The ingratitude of Israel and its approaching rejection by Jehovah are set forth under the veil of a homely parable.

ii. *vv.* 8—24. A series of six “Woes” directed against the prevalent vices and injustice of the upper classes and leaders of the state.

iii. *vv.* 25—30. Isaiah’s first description of the Assyrian invaders, the agents of Jehovah’s chastisement, already appearing on the horizon of the prophet’s vision.

There are strong reasons for thinking that iii. formed originally the peroration of a different prophecy, entirely independent of *vv.* 1—24 (see below). i. and ii., on the other hand, form a connected whole to which *v.* 24 forms a suitable and well-marked conclusion. Although they may not have formed parts of a single spoken address, there are no grounds for supposing that they ever existed separately in writing.

To what date is this passage (*vv.* 1—24) to be ascribed? By the consent of nearly all critics, it belongs to the first period of Isaiah’s career, but beyond this it is impossible to speak very definitely. A comparison with ch. ii.—iv., however, suggests that the prophet has now acquired a more intimate knowledge of the state of society in Jerusalem, and is able to lay a firmer hand on the evils of his time. We shall probably not go far wrong if we assign the prophecy to a slightly later date than the preceding chapters.

1—7. THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD AND ITS APPLICATION.

One of the finest exhibitions of rhetorical skill and power which the book contains. The prophet appears in the guise of a minstrel before an assemblage of his countrymen, and proceeds to recite the unfortunate experience of a “friend” of his with his vineyard. The simple story, told in light popular verse, disarms the suspicions of the crowd, and the singer, having secured their sympathy, demands a verdict on the course which a man might be expected to pursue with so refractory a vineyard as this (*v.* 3). The answer was so obvious that the people, like our Lord’s hearers on a similar occasion (Matt. xxi. 41), had practically assented to their own condemnation before they clearly perceived the drift of the discourse. But from this point onwards the parable becomes more and more transparent, till at last the prophet, with a sudden change of rhythm (see on *v.* 6), throws off all disguise and drives home the lesson of the whole in the crashing lines of *v.* 7.

The idea of Israel as the Lord’s vineyard probably originated with Isaiah. (Cf. ch. iii. 14, xxvii. 2 ff.; Jer. ii. 21, xii. 10 f.; Ps. lxxx. 8 ff.; Matt. xx. 1 ff., xxi. 33 ff. and parallels.)

1. (Four lines.) The first half of the verse contains the preamble, the second is the commencement of the poem.

My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:
 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
 And planted it *with* the choicest vine,
 And built a tower in the midst of it,
 And also made a winepress therein:
 And he looked that *it* should bring forth grapes,
 And it brought forth wild grapes.
 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of ³
 Judah,

Now will I sing...vineyard] Translate:—

I would sing of my Friend,

My Friend's song about his vineyard.

The A.V. has the merit, however, of distinguishing the two closely related words used for friend ("wellbeloved" and "beloved"). The difference probably has only a metrical value. Isaiah does not mean as yet to excite curiosity as to who the "Friend" is, only he cannot, even in a parable, divest himself of the consciousness that he represents the interests of Another.

A vineyard had my Friend

On a fertile peak.

a very fruitful hill] lit. "a horn, the son of fatness." "Apertos Bacchus amat colles" (Verg. *Georg.* II. 113). The land of Palestine is no doubt meant, but it is a mistake to allegorise the details of the imagery. This use of the word "horn" for "hill" is not found elsewhere in the O. T., but has many parallels in Arabic as well as other languages (cf. "Schreckhorn," &c.). It is chosen here for the sake of the assonance with the word for "vineyard."

2. (Six lines.) The situation was all that could be desired: and labour had not been spared. Note the resemblances in Matt. xxi. 33 ff.; Mk. xii. 1 ff. *fenced it]* **digged it** (R.V. marg.). The word is not found elsewhere, but the meaning is certain.

gathered out the stones thereof] In Heb. a single word: lit. "stoned it" (ch. lxii. 10). The phrase "stone a field," for "clear it of stones," is said to be common in some parts of England.

the choicest vine] A technical name (collective) for the finest sort of grapes grown in Syria. The word occurs again in Jer. ii. 21; the corresponding noun of unity (fem.) in Gen. xlix. 11. *built a tower]* for the watchers; not a mere hut, as in i. 8.

and also...winepress] **yea, and hewed out a winefat** (ὕπολῆμιον, Mk. xii. 1). The *yegeb* is the receptacle (here cut out of the rock) into which the juice flows from the winepress (*gath*). (Cf. Joel iii. 13; Prov. iii. 10; Neh. xiii. 15, &c.) The emphasis on this clause calls attention to the owner's confident expectation of a return for his outlay.

brought forth wild grapes] Cf. Jer. ii. 21.

3. (Four lines.) The beginning of a new stanza is marked by the "And now" as in v. 5.

- Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.
 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard,
 That I have not done in it?
 Wherefore, when I looked that *it* should bring forth
 grapes,
 Brought it forth wild grapes?
 5 And now go to, I will tell you what I *will* do to my
 vineyard:
 I *will* take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be
 eaten up;
 And break down the wall thereof, and it shall be
 trodden down:
 6 And I will lay it waste:
 It shall not be pruned, nor digged;
 But there shall come up briers and thorns:

betwixt me and my vineyard] The change of person here is the first hint of a deeper meaning under the words of the song.

4. (Four lines.) The case for the owner of the vineyard.

What could have been done] lit. **What more is there to do** (cf. 2 Ki. iv. 13).

wherefore, when I looked.....wild grapes] Lit. **why did I look that it should...and it brought forth wild grapes.** The co-ordination of clauses assimilates the ending of the second stanza to that of the first. (For other examples of the same order, see Davidson, *Synt.* § 126, R. 4.)

5, 6. The hearers are silent, and the prophet proceeds to pass sentence on the vineyard.

And now, let me tell you, I pray,
 What I am about to do to my vineyard.

The construction in the second line is the *fut. instans*; the owner's mind is finally made up.

5. *I will take away...and break down*] better simply, **Remove...Break down**—absolute infs. in apposition to “what.” The vineyard is provided both with a **hedge** (of thorns) and a **wall** (of stone).

6. *lay it waste*] or, **make an end of it.** The word is thought to be connected with that rendered “desolate” in ch. vii. 19,—better “precipitous,” “cut off,” hence (as here) “made an end of.”

there shall come up...thorns] The Heb. is more forcible: **it shall go up in thorns and thistles.** “Thorns and thistles,” a phrase peculiar to the book of Isaiah: vii. 23, 24, 25, ix. 18, x. 17, xxvii. 4. The change of rhythm referred to (Introd. Note above) commences with this clause—rightly, since the next line reveals the whole drift of the parable: He who can *command the clouds* must be no other than Jehovah himself.

I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel,

And the men of Judah his pleasant plant:

And he looked for judgment, but behold oppression;

For righteousness, but behold a cry.

Woe unto them that join house to house,

8

7. The formal application of the parable, emphasising two facts: (1) Jehovah's vineyard is the *house of Israel*, but especially the *men of Judah*, the plant of his delight (R.V. marg.); (2) "the wild grapes" it produces are the frightful oppressions and perversion of justice which are perpetrated in its midst. The underlying thought is that Jehovah's signal care and goodness ought to have resulted in a national life corresponding to His moral character—a fundamental truth of the prophetic theology.

He looked for judgment (*mishpāt*), but behold bloodshed (*mispāh*);
For righteousness (*ṣēdāqāh*), but behold a cry! (*ṣē'āqāh*).

These powerful assonances, which cannot be reproduced in English, are evidently designed to clinch the moral of the parable in the memories of the hearers. The "cry" is that of the oppressed, cf. Job xix. 7.

8—24. DENUNCIATION OF THE SOCIAL EVILS WHICH CALL DOWN GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE NATION.

The indictment contains six counts, each introduced by the word "Woe," and is addressed exclusively to the upper classes, although the punishment of their sin falls on the nation as a whole. The prophet sets before us a vivid picture of a debased aristocracy, in whom public virtue has been eaten out by avarice and sensuality; and he traces with remarkable insight the effect of these sins in the religious insensibility and perversion of the moral sentiments which characterised the nobles of Judah at this time.

8—10. The first woe, against the absorption of small properties by the wealthy landowners. Cruel evictions, by which the smaller peasant proprietors lost not only their homes but the rights of citizenship, were common in the age of Isaiah, both in Judah and Israel. Cf. Mic. ii. 2, 9; Am. ii. 6 f. "The old Israelite state was so entirely based on the participation of every freeman in the common soil, and so little recognised the mere possession of capital, that men were in danger of losing civil rights along with house and fields, and becoming mere hirelings or even slaves" (Duhm). An instance of the tenacity with which the Hebrew yeoman clung to his land may be seen in 1 Kings xxi. For legal checks to this evil, see Lev. xxv. 8 ff.; Num. xxvii. 1—11, xxxvi.; Deut. xxvii. 17.

That lay field to field, till *there* be no place,
That they may be placed alone in the midst of the
earth!

- 9 In mine ears *said* the LORD of hosts,
Of a truth many houses shall be desolate,
Even great and fair, without inhabitant.
10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath,
And the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah.
11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that*
they may follow strong drink;
That continue until night, *till* wine inflame them!
12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe,
And wine, are *in* their feasts:
But they regard not the work of the LORD,
Neither consider the operation of his hands.

8. *that they may be...earth*] Render with R.V., and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land; i.e. so that only the few have residential rights.

9, 10. The divine judgment on this evil. Cf. Am. v. 11.

9. *In mine ears said the LORD of hosts*] The verb is to be supplied as in xxii. 14: *In my ears (hath revealed himself) Jehovah....* It is a prophetic "audition"; the words which follow seem actually to sound in his ears. The great houses shall be uninhabited, because—

10. The land shall be smitten with the curse of barrenness; Jehovah's remedy for land-grabbing.

ten acres] lit. *ten yoke*; a yoke of land being

"As much as two stout oxen

Could plough from morn till night."

one bath] (of wine),—about 8 gallons.

seed of a homer...ephah] The *ephah* is a dry measure of the same capacity as the *bath*; the *homer* is ten *ephahs* (Ez. xlv. 11).

11—17. The second woe, against dissipation and the spiritual blindness which accompanies it. Cf. xxviii. 1, 7 ff.

11. *rise up early*] Drinking in the morning was considered disreputable by the Jews (Eccl. x. 16 f.; Acts ii. 15) and Romans; but not, apparently, by the Arabs (Gesenius). The word for *strong drink* seems to be a general name for various kinds of alcoholic liquors obtained from dates, honey, raisins, barley, &c.

that continue...inflame them] rather, *that sit late into the night, wine inflaming them.*

12. Cf. Am. vi. 5, 6.

And the harp...feasts] better, *And guitar and harp, tambourine and flute, and wine constitute their banquet*;—as if to drown the voice of conscience and destroy the sense of Jehovah's presence and working in their midst.

the work of the LORD...the operation of his hands] i.e. the crowning

Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because ¹³
they have no knowledge:

And their honourable men *are* famished,

And their multitude dried up with thirst.

Therefore hell hath enlarged herself,

14

And opened her mouth without measure :

And their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp,

And he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

And the mean man shall be brought down,

15

And the mighty man shall be humbled,

And the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled :

But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, ¹⁶

work of judgment which he is about to execute, and of which there were many ominous warnings for those who could discern the signs of the times: "opus aliquod illustre futurum...quod Deus hoc ipso tempore iam moliebatur" (Vitr.). Cf. v. 19, ch. x. 12, xxviii. 21; Ps. xxviii. 5. A similar thought is expressed in Am. vi. 6, where the luxurious nobles are charged with insensibility to the "ruin of Joseph."

13. **Therefore** (because its leaders are so blind) **my people goeth into captivity** (proph. perf.). This is the only explicit mention of exile in Isaiah. Cf. again Am. vi. 7. The next words may be rendered either **from lack of knowledge** (R.V.) or **without knowing it**—"unawares" (Cheyne). The former gives the better sense (cf. Hos. iv. 6).

their honourable men...their multitude] lit. "its glory"... "its tumult." The contrast, however, is rightly indicated by A.V.—the *noblesse* over against the populace. *famished*] Hebr. "men of hunger." But the word for "men" is poetic (iii. 25) and never found in such phrases as this. The ancient versions, with a different vocalisation, read "dead with hunger," which is obviously too strong. Most commentators now follow Ewald and Hitzig, and alter the text in accordance with Deut. xxxii. 24 (R.V. "wasted"), reading "sucked out (exhausted) with hunger." This involves the change of a single letter, and yields a suitable parallelism to "dried up with thirst."

14—17. A second threatening, in a sublime image, of the sudden destruction of Jerusalem. The transition to the fate of the capital is somewhat abrupt.

14. *hell hath enlarged herself*] better, **Sheol hath enlarged her appetite** (Hab. ii. 5). Sheol, the Underworld, the realm of the dead (like the Greek Hades), is here, as elsewhere, conceived as a devouring insatiable monster; cf. Hos. xiii. 14; Jon. ii. 2; Cant. viii. 6; Prov. i. 12, xxx. 16.

and their glory...descend into it] Render (nearly as Cheyne) **and down goes her (Jerusalem's) pomp, and her tumult and her uproar and (all) that is (so) jubilant in her.**

15, 16. A reminiscence of the refrain in ch. ii. 9, 11, 17; but with significant modifications. These verses seem to interrupt the connexion of v. 17 with v. 14, and are either parenthetical or interpolated.

And God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

17 Then shall the lambs feed after their manner,
And the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
And sin as it were with a cart rope :

19 That say, Let him make speed, *and* hasten his work,
That we may see *it* :

And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come,
That we may know *it*.

20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil ;
That put darkness for light, and light for darkness ;
That put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter !

16. *God that is holy...*] the Holy God sanctifies Himself through righteousness. God "sanctifies Himself," i.e. compels the recognition of His divinity, by the righteous judgments in which He reveals His true nature as the Holy One of Israel (cf. xxix. 23).

17. The obverse of the picture in v. 14. The city, with all its tumult and gaiety, has vanished into the underworld, and now flocks are seen grazing amidst the ruins,—an image of awful desolation rather than of "idyllic peace."

Then shall the lambs...manner] **And lambs shall graze as in their pasture** (R.V.). *strangers*] sojourners—perhaps "nomadic shepherds." But the reading of the LXX. (*ἀγρως*=lambs) can be explained by a slight change in the text and is on some grounds to be preferred.

18, 19. The third woe, against the mocking scepticism which leads men to harden themselves in sin. The men addressed do not believe in the prophet's threats of a day of retribution yet all the while they are unconsciously doing their utmost to bring about their fulfilment.

18. The figure seems to express two ideas : (1) the determination with which these men set themselves to work iniquity, and (2) the inevitable connexion between sin and judgment. The idea of punishment is included in the words *iniquity* (or "guilt") and *sin*.

19. An impious challenge to Jehovah to make good His words spoken through the prophet. This defiant unbelief seems to have been the reigning spirit in the political circles of Isaiah's time ; xxviii. 14 f., 22 ; cf. Jer. v. 12, xvii. 15.

20. The fourth woe, against those who confuse moral distinctions.

Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, 21
 And prudent in their own sight!
 Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, 22
 And men of strength to mingle strong drink:
 Which justify the wicked for reward, 23
 And take away the righteousness of the righteous from
 him.

Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, 24
 And the flame consumeth the chaff,
 So their root shall be as rottenness,
 And their blossom shall go up as dust:

Amongst the "wise men" of the time (Prov. xxv. 1) there may have been a class of sophists, who employed their subtlety in making out a case for abuses condemned by the unsophisticated moral sense.

21. The fifth woe, against the self-satisfied astuteness of the politicians. That the prophet has the statesmen in his eye is probable from such passages as xxviii. 9 f., xxix. 14 f., xxx. 1, 10 f., xxxi. 1 f.

22, 23. The sixth woe, against dissolute and corrupt judges. In vv. 11 f. drunkenness was denounced as destructive of all serious thought; here it is spoken of as the parent of injustice on the bench. Cf. Prov. xxxi. 4 f.

22. *them that are mighty*] **heroes.**

to mingle strong drink] This was a delicate operation, almost a fine art, demanding a refined taste and much experience (Prov. xxiii. 30). The phrase does not mean to dilute with water, which was common among Greeks and Romans, but rather to enhance by the addition of aromatic herbs (cf. "spiced wine" in Cant. viii. 2).

23. These valiant drinkers are weak enough in their official capacity; they acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent. *justify the wicked*] "wicked" and "righteous" are here used in their forensic sense: "he who is in the wrong" and "he who is in the right" (cf. Ex. ix. 27). So "take away the righteousness" means "declare guilty"—the opposite of "justify."

24. The conclusion. Render with R.V.

Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble,
 And as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, &c.

The similes are taken from two common customs, the burning of the stubble in the fields, and the use of dry grass for fuel. The comparison is completed in a different figure.

root...blossom] The expression is found on a Phœnician sarcophagus (Eshmunazar), "let him not have root below or fruit above"; and frequently in the O.T., Is. xiv. 29, xxxvii. 31; Am. ii. 9; Hos. ix. 16, &c.

Because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts,

And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people,

the law of the LORD of hosts] See on i. 10. The last clause is a summary description of the sins of the nation; the source from which they all spring is the rejection of the prophetic message.

25—30. A WARLIKE NATION, SUMMONED FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, IS THE DESTINED INSTRUMENT OF ISRAEL'S FINAL CHASTISEMENT.

That the Assyrians are here alluded to is certain both from the explicit statements of later prophecies, and from the terms of the description itself. It speaks of the foe as characterised by the rapidity of his movements, the perfection of his discipline and military equipment, his love of conquest, and his irresistible might. These features are no doubt highly idealised (as was natural in a first sketch), but it is clear that some particular nation is meant, and we can have no hesitation in saying that the reference is to the most perfect military machine that then existed, the Assyrian army.

Although the passage might be explained fairly enough as the continuation of v. 24, it gains immensely in significance when read as the final strophe of the prophecy in ch. ix. 8—x. 4, a position to which several considerations lead us to assign it. (1) The latter part of v. 25 occurs as a refrain in ix. 12, 17, 21 and x. 4. It is found nowhere else and its isolated occurrence in v. 25 distinctly weakens the force of v. 24. (2) The four equal strophes of ix. 8—x. 4 correspond very nearly in length with vv. 26—30. (3) After reading x. 4, we feel that the last word has not been spoken: the hand is still outstretched, we wait to hear of the final blow. The verses before us supply the appropriate climax. On the other hand, they are not necessary where they stand, v. 24 affording a satisfactory conclusion. The hypothesis, to be sure, does not remove every difficulty. It is vain to speculate as to the reasons which may have led to the transference; although it might have been suggested by the appositeness of the passage as a reply to the challenge of v. 19. Further, v. 25 is far too short for a complete strophe, and therefore can hardly have followed *immediately* on x. 4. We must suppose that some verses have been omitted in the process of transference, as irrelevant in their new context.

25. *Therefore*] The Hebr. word differs from that in vv. 13, 14, 24, and agrees with that in ix. 17. The following tenses are perfects (or consec. impf.) usually taken as prophetic perf.; but this is scarcely natural. Past judgments are probably referred to (see on ix. 8 ff.). Some think of a pestilence (Am. iv. 10), pestilence being preeminently the stroke of God (*he hath smitten them*); others (from the next clause) of an earthquake. Both may be meant.

And he hath stretched forth his hand against them,
and hath smitten them:

And the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were
torn in the midst of the streets.

For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.

And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, 26
And will hiss unto them from the end of the earth:

And behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:
None *shall be* weary nor stumble amongst them; 27

None shall slumber nor sleep;
Neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed,
Nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:

Whose arrows *are* sharp, and all their bows bent, 28

Their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint,
And their wheels like a whirlwind:

Their roaring *shall be* like a lion, 29

their carcasses were torn] rather, *were as offal*, a very common figure (2 Ki. ix. 37; Jer. xvi. 4, xxv. 33; Zeph. i. 17; Ps. lxxxiii. 10).

For all this...] See on ch. ix. 12.

26—29. A powerful description of the advance of the invaders, who however remain unnamed.

26. *And he will lift up an ensign*] i.e. a signal, set up on a hill (xiii. 2, xviii. 3, xxx. 17; cf. xi. 10, 12) as a point of rendezvous. (Mark the significant change to the future tense.)

the nations from far] better, *a nation from afar* (cf. Am. vi. 14). The singular is demanded by what follows, and is obtained by removing the last letter of one word to the beginning of the next, exactly as in Jer. v. 15. *will hiss*] as in ch. vii. 18; Zech. x. 8. The image is that of a bee-keeper alluring the swarm.

with speed swiftly] because it is Jehovah who calls. "They" should be "he," to the end of the chapter, the nation being individualised.

27. Their accoutrement is perfect down to the smallest detail.

28. *bows bent*] which was done only for immediate action. *his horses' hoofs...flint*] Therefore he will not shrink from riding them on the rocky soil of Palestine, which was extremely unfavourable to the use of horses (Am. vi. 12). Similar allusions are frequent in ancient literature (κρατερώνυχες ἵπποι), the shoeing of horses being unknown in antiquity. The bows and arrows, cavalry and chariots, are all characteristic of the Assyrians.

29. *Their roaring...*] Or, *he has a roar like that of a lioness, he roars like young lions and growls seizing the prey, &c.* Two words are here used of the lion's roar, the first is perhaps that uttered as he

They shall roar like young lions :

Yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey,

And shall carry *it* away safe, and none shall deliver *it*.

30 And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea :

And if *one* look unto the land, behold darkness *and* sorrow,

And the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

searches for prey, the second the low growl with which he springs on his victim.

30. Apparently an image of the land in the throes of the invasion. The verse, which presents many difficulties, may read somewhat as follows : **And he shall growl over him in that day like the growling of the sea, and if one look to the earth, behold darkness of distress (and the light is dark) in its clouds.** The text is probably in some disorder. The words in brackets are wanting in the LXX. The first clause is generally interpreted of the growl of the invader over the prostrate land; some, however, understand it of the voice of Jehovah (the thunder) moving overhead and directing the attack. The latter part of the verse has a general resemblance to viii. 22; the words "look to the earth" seem to require some such antithesis as "look up" in viii. 21.

in the heavens thereof] The word is not elsewhere used and is of uncertain meaning.

CH. VI.

ISAIAH'S INAUGURAL VISION.

— It is now universally acknowledged that this chapter records Isaiah's initiation into the office of a prophet. The opinion of many older commentators that it represents a renewal or recovery of the prophetic consciousness after several years of public activity, was based on the erroneous assumption that the order of the book is in the main chronological and that the previous chapters contain prophecies from the reign of Uzziah (see also on v. 5, below). Everything in the narrative itself suggests that it is an inaugural vision, a record of the experience by which Isaiah was made a prophet. The consciousness of standing in a peculiar relation to God, of personal reconciliation to Him, of being in His council, and bearing a definite commission straight from Himself, dates from the moment when in an ecstasy he "saw the Lord." The vision is undoubtedly an actual experience, not the mere embodiment of an idea; it occurred in the death-year of Uzziah, as the prophet, looking back after some lapse of time, distinctly recalls. Then Isaiah saw God, not indeed with his bodily eyes, but in a prophetic trance, in which the ordinary operations of the mind were suspended and spiritual realities assumed concrete and visible forms. That the publica-

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord 6

tion of the vision belongs to a more advanced stage of the prophet's ministry seems implied by the note of time in *v. 1*, and is probable on other grounds. Its place in the book is best explained by the supposition that it was written as the prologue to a short collection of oracles (*vii.—ix. 7*, see General Introd. p. lxxii) giving a summary of Isaiah's teaching in the early part of the reign of Ahaz. But we have no right to imagine that the prophet, from his subsequent experience, read into his original commission elements which it did not convey to his mind at the time. To suppose that he could not have carried on his work under the depressing conviction (expressed in *vv. 9—13*) that he would only harden the people in unbelief is to mistake the prophet's attitude to his work. If there were any force in the argument, it would prove too much, for it would be necessary to suppose that the chapter was written after Isaiah's life-work was over. But Isaiah, like his predecessors Amos and Hosea and his successors Jeremiah and Ezekiel, spoke the word of God under an inward constraint, and his writings contain no sign that he ever cherished any expectations of success beyond what the vision allows.

The chapter stands unrivalled in the Old Testament both for grandeur of conception and the majestic simplicity of its style. The narrative is in prose: the speeches are rhythmical. There are strictly no divisions, but for convenience of exposition we may distinguish three stages in the process of initiation:—

i. *vv. 1—4*. The vision of Jehovah in His glory, and the splendours of His court.

ii. *vv. 5—8*. The impression produced by this sight on the mind of the prophet: at first a crushing sense of imperfection and guilt, which is transformed by a symbolic act denoting forgiveness into glad self-surrender to the service of the King.

iii. *vv. 9—13*. His commission to declare the word of God to the people, with an announcement of its twofold effect: (1) to increase the spiritual insensibility of the mass of the nation (*vv. 9, 10*), and (2) to lay waste the land by a succession of exterminating judgments, which shall leave only a remnant to form the nucleus of the future people of God (*11—13*).

1—4. Jehovah appears to the prophet in human form, and as a King, seated on a throne, surrounded by ministering servants who sing His praise (cf. 1 Ki. xxii. 19 ff.). The scene is the Temple (*v. 1*), where Isaiah probably was when the vision occurred. There is no occasion to suppose that a "heavenly palace" is meant. What the prophet sees is the spiritual reality of which the Temple was a symbol, Jehovah's presence as King in the midst of His people. Cf. ch. viii. 18.

1. *In the year that king Uzziah died*] i.e. about 740 B.C.; see Chronological Note, pp. lxxv f. Whether the event happened before or after the king's death cannot be determined. It lends an additional interest to the vision if we adopt the latter view, and regard this as the divine answer to the anxious foreboding thoughts which naturally arose in a susceptible mind at the death of a strong and successful ruler.

sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train
 2 filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each
 one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and
 with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
 3 And one cried unto another, and said,

The earthly king has passed away, and now Isaiah sees the true King in His glory.

I saw also the Lord] Many codices read here Jehovah, but the name in the received text is *Adonai*, the **Sovereign** (see on ch. i. 24). The word "also" answers to nothing in the original. The words **high and lofty** apply to the throne, not to Jehovah Himself, as in ch. lvii. 15.

his train filled the temple] The skirts of His vesture fill the whole space, and on these alone, not on the person of Jehovah, Isaiah allows his eyes to rest.

2. *Above it ... seraphims*] better, **Seraphim were standing over Him**, i.e. in the attitude of service. One standing in the presence of another who is seated is always said to be *over* him, whatever their mutual relations may be: 1 Ki. xxii. 19; Gen. xviii. 2, 8; Ex. xviii. 13, &c. The Seraphim (probably "fiery beings") are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture as angelic beings. Their function in this vision is purely symbolical. They are the attendants of Jehovah's court or the ministers of the invisible sanctuary; they reflect the glory of God, and by their presence and actions suggest new and fuller conceptions of His ineffable majesty. The basis of the symbol is obscure. The serpents with which the Israelites were plagued in the desert are called Seraphim (sing. *Sārāph*: Num. xxi. 6—9; Deut. viii. 15), and some connexion between the two uses of the word is probable. An intermediate link would be supplied by the "flying Saraph" of ch. xiv. 29, xxx. 6.—apparently an allusion to a widely diffused mythological notion; see Herodotus II. 75 on the winged serpents of Arabia. It is also worthy of notice that the brazen Saraph (Num. xxi. 8) made by Moses must have been a conspicuous object in the temple at the time of Isaiah's call (2 Ki. xviii. 4). On the other hand the analogy of the Cherubim has led to the theory that both are personifications of the phenomena of the thunder-storm, the Cherubim representing the dark cloud and the Seraphim the serpent-like lightning (see Cheyne, *Comm.*, and art. 'Cherubim' in *Encyc. Brit.*). Different elements, in fact, seem to be combined in the conception of the Saraph; but whether it had been already incorporated in the religion of Israel, or whether Isaiah was the first who lifted it into the sphere of pure spiritual ideas it is quite impossible to say. Isaiah's Seraphim are winged creatures, but certainly not serpentine in form, probably human, or at least partly human, like the Cherubim (Ez. i. 5—14).
with twain he covered his face...] The sense is well expressed by the Targum: "With two he covered his face *that he might not see*; and with two he covered his body *that he might not be seen*."

3. *And one cried unto another*] (frequentat. impf.). Cf. Rev. iv. 8.

Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of Hosts:

That which fills the whole earth is His glory.

Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts :

The whole earth *is* full of his glory.

And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him ⁴ that cried, and the house was filled *with* smoke. Then ⁵ said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people

The word "holy," thrice repeated as if it struck the chord to which the whole nature of these pure beings vibrated (the ancient church found here an allusion to the mystery of the Trinity) sums up the meaning of the vision in so far as it is a revelation of God.) The general notion of holiness is too complex to be analysed here. The root idea appears to be that of *distance* or *separation*. As a predicate of deity it expresses first of all the awful contrast between the divine and the human, and then those positive attributes of God which constitute true divinity, and call for the religious emotions of awe, reverence and adoration. What Isaiah here receives, therefore, is a new and overpowering impression of the Supreme Godhead of Jehovah; the whole impact of the vision on his mind is concentrated in the word which he hears from the lips of the seraphim. Although the idea of holiness in the O.T. is never to be identified with that of moral purity, it is clear from Isaiah's immediate sense of guilt that ethical perfection is included among the attributes which make up the holiness or Godhead of Jehovah (see Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, pp. 224 ff.).

The second line of the Trisagion celebrates the "glory" of Jehovah, His manifestation of Himself in nature,—one of the leading thoughts of the second part of this book (ch. xl. ff.). The seraphim contemplate the universal diffusion of this "glory" (*sub specie aeternitatis*) as a present fact; elsewhere it is an ideal yet to be realised: Num. xiv. 21; Hab. ii. 14.

4. *the posts of the door moved*] the foundations of the thresholds shook (R.V.).

was filled (began to fill) with smoke] The smoke symbolises the "dark side of Jehovah's self-manifestation" (Rev. xv. 8), the reaction of His holy nature against sin. It answers to the rising consciousness of alienation and impurity in the prophet's mind, expressed in the next verse.

5. Isaiah is overwhelmed with the sense of his own unworthiness; he feels himself cut off by a spiritual defect from participation in the solemn mystery which he, alone of mortals, has been privileged to behold; his *eyes* have seen, but his *lips* are impure.

I am undone] The Vulgate and other ancient versions give the impossible rendering, "I have been silent" (*tacui*). Jerome's paraphrase is interesting as explaining the genesis of a curious legend, that Isaiah had already been a prophet, but had lost the gift of inspiration through his unfaithfulness: "quia tacui et non audacter Osiam regem corripui, ideo labia mea immunda sunt."

a man of unclean lips] "A pure lip" is required for the worship of

of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the
 6 LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto
 me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken
 7 with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid *it* upon
 my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and
 8 thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also

Jehovah (Zeph. iii. 9); Isaiah would fain join in the praises of the Seraphim, but the impulse is checked by the uncleanness of his lips, which is the impurity of his whole nature concentrated, as it were, in the organs of expression. Isaiah is not yet a prophet; but in this profound sense of the necessity for a consecration of the faculty of speech we must surely recognise an unconscious preparation for the task of speaking the word of God.)

a people of unclean lips] Cf. ch. iii. 8. The vision of God which has brought his own sin to light, reveals to him also the sinfulness of the people among whom he dwells. They too are unfit to take the holy name of Jehovah on their lips; their whole worship of Him is profane. And this comes home to him as an aggravation of his guilt, that his mind is saturated with the atmosphere of ungodliness in which he lives and moves and has his being.

for mine eyes have seen the King] A second ground for the ejaculation "I am undone!" That the sight of God brings death to men is an idea frequently expressed in the O.T. (Ex. xix. 21, xxx. 20; Jud. xiii. 22); the preceding clauses shew that to Isaiah's consciousness the danger springs from sin, and not from mere creaturely frailty.

6, 7. The ceremony of purification is in many respects unique, and seems to involve several ideas: (1) It shews that contact with the fire of the divine holiness is not necessarily destructive even to man. It is possible to "dwell with devouring fire" (ch. xxxiii. 14). (2) It signifies the removal from the prophet of all in him which is incompatible with the holiness of Jehovah. Fire is both a symbol of holiness and an agent of purification (Num. xxxi. 23; Mal. iii. 2). "As earthly fire burns away external impurity, so the heavenly fire burns away the defilement of sin, first from the lips, but through them from the whole man" (Dillmann). (3) It is not without significance that the fire is taken "from off the altar." The *hot stone* (A.V. *live coal*) was an implement used in common life for transferring heat from the hearth to where it was required. The meaning of the Seraph's act is that the atoning efficacy of the altar is conveyed to the person of Isaiah, to his lips in particular, because there the sin of his nature had seemed to be concentrated.

7. *and thine iniquity...purged*] and thy guilt passes away and thy sin is atoned for. The last word is the technical term for the expiatory effect of the sacrificial ritual.

8. Now for the first time Isaiah hears the voice of God, the purification of his lips having fitted him for personal converse with Jehovah and spiritual sympathy with His purposes.

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here *am* I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, 9
Hear ye indeed, but understand not;
And see ye indeed, but perceive not.
Make the heart of this people fat, 10
And make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;
Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,
And understand *with* their heart, and convert, and be healed.

who will go for us?] The plural is not that of majesty, but includes the "council of the holy ones" (Ps. lxxxix. 7), or the angelic "hosts of heaven" (1 Ki. xxii. 19 f.).

Here am I; send me] The spontaneity and self-abandonment of this response are characteristic of Isaiah. He is as yet ignorant of the nature of his commission, yet he freely accepts it; and throughout life he never felt his message to be a grievous burden, as Jeremiah often did.

9, 10. The first effect of Isaiah's prophetic work: to increase the spiritual insensibility of the people. The prophet's words will go hand in hand with the "work of Jehovah," the development of His purpose in history (v. 12, cf. Am. iii. 7); the people shall hear the one and see the other, but neither will bring them to true insight.

9. *this people*] A contemptuous designation of Israel, peculiar to Isaiah: cf. ch. viii. 6, 12, ix. 16, xxviii. 11, 14, xxix. 13 f.

Hear ye indeed...] Rather:

Hear ye continually, but perceive not
And see ye continually, but understand not.

The verbs, of course, are imperatives. On the force of the inf. abs. see Davidson, *Synt.* § 86 c (where, however, a different view of this particular passage is taken).

10. *Make the heart...fat*] i.e. callous, unfeeling, Ps. cxix. 70. In Hebrew idiom, the "heart" includes the understanding. *shut* (lit. smear) *its eyes*] cf. xxix. 10, xlv. 18, xlii. 19 f.

The difficulties created in our minds by this startling, and even harsh, statement of a great law of the spiritual world, are partly due to the tendency of Scripture writers to refer all things immediately to the will of God. To the Hebrew mind what we call secondary causes scarcely exist, at least in the sphere of religion. That which, in given circumstances, is the inevitable result of God's providential dispensations is viewed absolutely, apart from its conditions, as a distinct divine purpose. The truth revealed to Isaiah is that the unbelief of his countrymen amounts to an incapacity for divine things, which can only be intensified by the further disclosure of the truth of God. And this, which is the inevitable issue of his own prophetic mission, is represented to him as

- 11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered,
 Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant,
 And the houses without man,
 And the land be utterly desolate,
 12 And the LORD have removed men far away,
 And *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the
 land.

Jehovah's intention in sending him. Isaiah realises the profound truth that the most decisive and searching judgment to which men are subjected lies in the abundance of the revelations of God vouchsafed to them. It is a principle often appealed to in the New Testament, and frequently in the very words of our prophet (Matt. xiii. 14 f. and parallels; Acts xvi. 26 f.; Rom. xi. 8). "This is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil" (John iii. 19).

11—13. The hardening of the people in unbelief is to be accompanied by a series of external judgments, culminating in the utter ruin of the nation.

11. *Lord, how long?*] The prophet feels that in the divine counsels there must be a limit to this process of judicial hardening, that it must reach a crisis with a day of hope beyond it. But the answer is "Not till the existing Israel has been annihilated."

Until the cities...without man] (Omit *the.*) Cf. ch. v. 9.

and the land be utterly desolate] lit. "be wasted to desolation." LXX., changing a letter, reads "and the land be left a desolation."

12. *and there be a great forsaking...land*] Better, **and great be the vacancy in the midst of the land.** The word "vacancy" (deserted place) is used in xvii. 9: for the thought cf. ch. v. 9, vii. 16 ff.

13. The verse reads:

And should there still be in it a tenth,
 It must again pass through the fire,
 Like the terebinth and like the oak,
 To which a stump (remains) when they are felled;
 A holy seed is the stump thereof.

(The last clause is wanting in the LXX., and with its omission it undoubtedly becomes possible to understand the figure of the verse as a sentence of final rejection; not only will the tree be cut down, but its stump will be destroyed by fire.) The usual interpretation (which there is no reason to abandon) is: As the terebinth and oak when cut down retain the principle of vitality in their roots, which will again spring up into a great tree (cf. Job xiv. 7 ff.), so the ruined Israel contains the indestructible germ of the future kingdom of God, the "holy seed" is wrapped up in it. The difference is not material, since in any view Isaiah speaks of an extermination of the actually existing people: but the first explanation excludes Isaiah's characteristic doctrine of the Remnant, which we should certainly expect to find in his inaugural vision. It must have been shortly after this time that he gave a signifi-

But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and *it* shall return, and ¹³ shall be eaten:

As a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, when they cast *their leaves*:

So the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

cant expression to that doctrine in the name of his son *Shear-jashub* (see on next chapter).

a tenth] Perhaps an allusion to Am. v. 3.

A symbolical representation of the idea of this verse is given in Ez. v. 1—4. Cf. also Zech. xiii. 8.

CHAPTERS VII. 1.—IX. 7.

A collection of prophecies belonging to the reign of Ahaz. Two important events in Isaiah's career are here chronicled. (1) The first is his *début* as a practical statesman, seeking to shape the destinies of his country by a definite policy urged on the king and his advisers. (2) The second is the formation of a band of disciples, accompanied apparently by the prophet's temporary withdrawal from public life (viii. 16—18). Hence we obtain an obvious division of the section into two parts, which may have been separated by a considerable interval of time, although there is no great reason to doubt that the whole was written before the death of Ahaz. (1) Ch. vii. 1—viii. 15 is a summary of Isaiah's activity during the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion; (2) viii. 19—ix. 7 probably represents the instruction communicated by the prophet to the inner circle of his believing adherents. In both parts the chapters exhibit the working out in history of the principles revealed in the latter part of ch. vi. The "great refusal" of Ahaz (vii. 12), approved as it seems to have been by public opinion, was a signal illustration of the judicial hardening produced by the overwhelming clearness of the divine revelation; and the gathering of a small religious fellowship round the person and family of the prophet shews how the doctrine of the remnant or the "holy seed" became from this time a practical ideal in his ministry.

In order to understand Isaiah's words and actions at this period it is necessary to realise as clearly as possible the salient features of the political situation created in Judah by the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion. Hostilities on the part of both Syria and Ephraim against Judah are recorded as having commenced before the death of Jotham (2 Ki. xv. 37), though there is no mention at that time of a formal alliance between the two powers. It was only after the accession of Ahaz that the crisis became acute; and the words of v. 2 seem to point to the sudden development of a new and formidable danger. This consisted in the avowed object of the league to destroy the independence of Judah by the removal of the native dynasty and the establishment of a creature of the allies on the throne of David (v. 6). It is generally supposed that the ultimate motive of the attack was to coerce Judah into a coalition to oppose the westward progress of the Assyrian arms.

- 7 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah king of Judah, *that* Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of

To allay what he perceived to be a groundless alarm on the part of the king and court was one purpose of Isaiah's memorable interview with Ahaz. But this of itself does not explain the extraordinary vehemence and urgency of the prophet's appeal. It becomes fully intelligible only when we understand that he wished to warn the king against the fatal step, which he afterwards took, of calling in the aid of Assyria against his two petty foes. It is only reasonable to suppose that this obvious and tempting expedient had already been discussed in the royal council and was favourably entertained by Ahaz. Isaiah was no doubt alive to the grave political dangers which would result from placing the country in a position of servitude to the Assyrian Empire. He also perceived how unnecessary it was for Judah to make any advances in that direction at this time, since it was quite certain that the ambitious schemes of Rezin and Pekah would speedily be crushed by Tiglath-pileser, whether Ahaz applied to him or not. All this must have been evident to any sagacious observer who kept his head amidst the general panic caused by the approach of the allied armies. But the prophet perceived that higher interests than the political future of the nation were at stake. He was opposed, on religious grounds, to all compacts with heathen powers as involving disloyalty to Jehovah and distrust of His power. The crisis presented itself to him as a test of the religious mind of the people, of its capacity for exercising that fearless trust in Jehovah's word which alone could guide it safely through the complications of the immediate future to the felicity that lay beyond. (Hence the great object of this encounter with Ahaz is to bring round the king to Isaiah's own attitude of calm reliance on the help of God, and above all things to dissuade him from compromising his position by entering into direct relations with Assyria.)

CHAP. VII. ISAIAH'S INTERVIEW WITH AHAZ AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The chapter is divided into two well-marked sections :

i. *vv.* 1—17. The prophet meets Ahaz at a critical juncture of the war and holds out a promise of deliverance on the condition of faith in Jehovah. The king's unbelief is answered by the threat of an Assyrian invasion.

(1) The historical introduction (*vv.* 1—3).

(2) The divine message of assurance and encouragement, ending with a warning against unbelief (*vv.* 4—9). (We must suppose that something in the king's demeanour had betrayed his impatience of the prophet's exhortation.)

(3) If any sign in heaven or earth will overcome the king's incredulity, he has but to name it and it shall come to pass (*vv.* 10, 11). Ahaz still remains obdurate (*v.* 12).

Israel, went up *towards* Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house² of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then³ said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit

(4) Isaiah announces the God-given sign of Immanuel, as a token (a) of deliverance from the immediate danger, and (b) of the coming Assyrian invasion (vv. 13—17).

ii. vv. 18—25. An expansion of the threat of v. 17, but probably not spoken to Ahaz at the time. It is a picture of the desolation of the land, ravaged by Egyptian and Assyrian troops, and left destitute of all but the scantiest means of human subsistence.

1. The genealogy of Ahaz seems unnecessary for the contemporaries of Isaiah, although it might be given to connect the passage with ch. vi. 1. The latter part of the verse closely resembles 2 Ki. xvi. 5; and it is not improbable that the data were supplied by an editor from the historical book, in order to make the circumstances intelligible to later generations of readers. Originally the introduction may have run: "And in the days of Ahaz it was reported to the house of David," &c.

to war against it, but could not prevail against it] lit. **to fight against it but were unable to fight against it**. From 2 Ki. xvi. 5 we learn that the city was blockaded. It was the object of the allies to take it by assault, but in this they were baffled, either by reason of the strength of the place, or because they were compelled to raise the siege. "Fight" means "fight at close quarters" as 2 Sam. xi. 20 compared with v. 1.

2. *the house of David*] (Cf. vv. 13, 17) either the court (ch. xxii. 22) or the royal family (1 Sam. xx. 16, &c.), which must have formed a numerous and powerful caste, and must have exercised a considerable influence on the government under a weak king like Ahaz. This was probably the first time that the Davidic dynasty had been menaced by a serious danger.

Syria is confederate with Ephraim] lit. **Syria has alighted upon Ephraim** (R.V. marg. "resteth"). The idea seems to be that the Syrian armies already occupy the Ephraimitish territory (settling there like a swarm of locusts, v. 19: 2 Sam. xvii. 12) preparatory to the joint attack. The fine simile at the end of the verse is enough to prove that Isaiah himself is the narrator.

3. The prophet is instructed to meet Ahaz at a certain point outside the city, taking his son with him for a sign to the king.

Shear-jashub] "Remnant-shall-turn," i.e. "turn to Jehovah," not "return from exile" (ch. x. 22). How much the name meant to Ahaz we cannot tell; nor is it clear whether the boy was present to have the incident impressed on his own memory, or to recall to the king's mind some earlier prophecy of Isaiah in which the name was explained.

4 of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; and say unto him,

Take heed, and be quiet;

Fear not, neither be fainthearted

For the two tails of these smoking firebrands,

The latter seems more probable. In any case the name embodies a fundamental idea of Isaiah's ministry (see on ch. vi. 13), and if it conveyed any significance to Ahaz at this time it was a prediction at once of judgment and hope: a remnant shall turn; but *only* a remnant!

[*at the end of the conduit...field*] On the same spot the Rabshakeh stood 34 years later and delivered Sennacherib's insulting message to Hezekiah. It seems therefore to have been within earshot of the wall (ch. xxxvi. 2, cf. v. 11; 2 Ki. xviii. 17, 26). On what side of the city it is to be sought is as yet a matter of conjecture. (1) The "upper pool" is by many identified with the *Birket el-Mamilla* (about half a mile to the west of the city), from which a canal leads to reservoirs within the walls. In this case it would be difficult to explain the expression "go out to the end of the conduit," and besides the distance from the wall is too great. (2) Tradition fixes the site of the Assyrian camp on the north of the city, and here an ancient aqueduct (older than Herod's temple) has been discovered which pierces the wall to the east of the Damascus gate, and discharges into a large reservoir in the northern quarter of the city. If this reservoir be the "upper pool" the end of its conduit would be the northern extremity of the canal mentioned. (3) A third suggestion is that the "upper pool" like the "lower pool" (ch. xxii. 9) was in the south of the city and inside the wall. It has been identified with a recently-discovered pool near the present pool of Siloam, and a conduit has also been excavated which carried its surplus water outside the wall, to where the "fuller's field" is thought to have been. Ahaz was at this anxious moment devoting his personal attention to the water supply of his capital. Operations were apparently in progress either for filling the reservoirs and cisterns within the city, or for stopping the sources that would be accessible to the enemy. In the historic sieges of Jerusalem the assailants always suffered more from scarcity of water than the defenders; and it is not impossible that the precautions taken on this occasion were the reason why the allies "were not able to fight against it."

4. The message to Ahaz begins with an exhortation to composure and presence of mind (cf. ch. xxx. 15). The prophet does not deprecate reasonable forethought for the safety of the city, but only the excessive alarm which might drive the court into a false and dangerous policy.

[*Take heed, and be quiet*] The first verb might be subordinate to the second: "See that thou keep calm." But it is better to take them independently: "ut et exterius contineat sese, et intus pacato sit animo" (Calvin).

[*the two tails...firebrands*] Render, with R.V. **these two tails of smoking firebrands**. This enterprise is but the last flicker of two expiring torches. Syria and Israel have both suffered severely from the

For the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, 5

Have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 6

Let us go up against Judah, and vex it,

And let us make a breach therein for us,

And set a king in the midst of it, *even* the son of Tabeal:

Thus saith the Lord God, 7

It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

For the head of Syria *is* Damascus, 8

And the head of Damascus *is* Rezin;

And within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that *it be* not a people.

Assyrians and their national independence will speedily be extinguished. Fire is the emblem of war (ch. xlii. 25).

the son of Remaliah] Pekah was a usurper, a *novus homo*, and Isaiah never condescends to utter his name. Cf. vv. 5, 9.

5—7. The project of Rezin and Pekah is opposed to the purpose of Jehovah and shall come to nought. The verses form a single sentence, 5 and 6 being the protasis and 7 the apodosis.

5. Change the order with R.V.: Because Syria hath counselled evil against thee, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, saying, &c.

6. *and vex it*] Rather frighten it (cf. v. 16, where the *Qal* of the same verb means “cower”), unless we adopt a conjecture of Gesenius giving the sense “press it hard.” The idea, however, is probably that the allies trusted greatly to the panic caused by the suddenness of their attack.

make a breach therein] break into it, by forcing the passes; as in 2 Chr. xxi. 17, &c.

the son of Tabeal] Another obscure adventurer like the son of Remaliah. The form of the name (*Tāb’ēl*, cf. *Tab-rimmon*, 1 Ki. xv. 18) suggests that the *protégé* of the allies was a Syrian. Their plan is very complete; the successor of Ahaz is already nominated.

8, 9. A confirmation of v. 7; but the thought is difficult to grasp. The general meaning seems to be that the league is an attempt to obliterate the political distinctions which Jehovah has established between the neighbouring states. (Observe that in v. 16 the prophet seems to speak as if Syria and Israel had become one kingdom in virtue of their alliance.) Syria and Ephraim are separate nationalities, each with its own capital and king; Judah belongs to neither of them and is not to be amalgamated with them. In short: “Damascus is the head of Syria *and of nothing else*, &c.” We may even suppose (with Ewald) that Isaiah intended to add, “but the head of Judah is Jerusalem and the head of Jerusalem is Jehovah of Hosts.”

8. *and within threescore and five years...people*] This clause is

- 9 And the head of Ephraim *is* Samaria,
 And the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son.
 If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.
- 10 Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,
- 11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God;

suspicious on several grounds. (1) Because of its position; Ephraim has not yet been mentioned, and a prophecy of its annihilation would hardly have been followed by an argument (9 a) which assumes its continued independence. (2) There is no analogy in the prophets for so exact a specification of time with regard to a distant event. When the prophets fix a term of years they use round numbers (ch. xxiii. 17, &c.). (3) Isaiah could not expect to allay the fears of Ahaz by a prediction that was not to be fulfilled for 65 years. In v. 16 and ch. viii. 4 he foretells the overthrow of Pekah and Rezin within a very short period. Even Delitzsch, who defends the verse as a whole, admits the force of the last two objections and proposes to substitute the words "within a little while." But the great majority of commentators agree in regarding the whole clause as a marginal gloss, intended to be read *after* the first half of v. 9. This view ought probably to be accepted; but Duhm rightly observes that the gloss must be a very old one, since a late annotator would almost certainly have dated the extermination of Ephraim from the destruction of Samaria in 721, about 15 years after Isaiah spoke. What precise event he had in his mind is indeed very uncertain. The most plausible conjecture remains that of Archbishop Ussher, who explained it of the settlement of foreign colonists in Samaria by Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal (Osnappar, Ezra iv. 2, 10). Sixty-five years from the assigned date of the prediction would bring us to about 670 B.C.; and Esarhaddon was succeeded by Assurbanipal about 668. Of course the chronology need not be strictly accurate.

9. If ye will not believe (*ta'āmēnū*) ye shall not be established (*tē'āmēnū*, 2 Sam. vii. 16). One of Isaiah's paronomasias; "*gläubet ihr nicht, so bleibet ihr nicht*" (Luther); "if ye will not have *faith*, ye shall not have *stait*" (G. A. Smith). Cf. 2 Chron. xx. 20. The words mark an epoch in the history of revelation; never before probably had the distinctively religious principle of faith been so plainly exhibited as the touchstone of character and of destiny (cf. Gen. xv. 6; Hab. ii. 4). Here as throughout Scripture faith means trust in the positive revelation of God, the faith required of Ahaz being whole-hearted acceptance of God's word through Isaiah. The doctrine is one of the foundation truths of this prophet's ministry (cf. xxviii. 16, xxx. 15; and see Introd. p. lv.).

10—12. Isaiah's last ineffectual effort to bring Ahaz to the attitude of faith. A sign is offered and refused.

10. *Moreover the LORD spake again*] Better, **And Jehovah spake further**. The expression does not of itself imply that this second communication followed immediately on the first, but that is certainly the most natural supposition.

11. *Ask thee a sign*] The "sign" (*'ôth, mōphēth*, here the former),

Ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt ¹² the LORD. And he said,

¹³

Hear ye now, O house of David;

Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

plays a very large part in O.T. religion and with considerable latitude of meaning. The most important cases are those in which a divine revelation is attested by some striking event within the range of immediate perception through the senses. Such a sign may be a supernatural occurrence conveying an irresistible persuasion of the divine agency (ch. xxxviii. 7, 22; Ex. vii. 8 ff.; Jud. vi. 17, 36 ff.; 1 Ki. xiii. 1 ff.). But it may also be an ordinary event, which acquires significance through its having been foretold, or asked for (Gen. xxiv. 14; 1 Sam. x. 2 ff.; xiv. 10; Luke ii. 12). Thus of two predicted events the nearer may be made a "sign" of the more remote (1 Sam. ii. 34; Jer. xlv. 29 f.). Or, in a still more general sense, the "sign" may be merely an incident of the fulfilled prediction, which carries the mind back to the time of the prophecy, when the sign was appointed (Ex. iii. 12; Is. xxxvii. 30). That for which a sign is here offered to Ahaz is the certainty of divine help, or (what is the same thing) the truth that God speaks to him through the prophet. Although Isaiah was undoubtedly prepared to give a miraculous sign (see next clause) it is not to be at once assumed that the sign actually given (vv. 14 ff.) must be of the same order.

ask it either in the depth...above] Lit.: **going deep to Sheol or mounting high above** (reading *shē'ōlāh* for *shē'ālāh*). It is thought by some that this translation could be obtained from the actual Hebrew vocalisation, but this is doubtful. It is at all events the one that would be most readily suggested by an unpointed text, and it is justified by the antithetic structure of the sentence. The whole realm of creation, from the heavens to the underworld, is as it were put at the disposal of Ahaz for the purpose of this sign. It has been said that Isaiah played a dangerous game in staking his reputation on so unbounded a choice. Undoubtedly he did, if he was not speaking under genuine divine inspiration.

12. The answer of Ahaz reveals his utter incapacity for the faith which Isaiah demanded. He evidently believes that the sign will happen if he asks it, yet he cannot trust the spiritual fact which lies behind it. He is afraid of being committed to a policy in which he has no confidence, and therefore, under a pretence of reverence, he declines the ordeal. **He will not put Jehovah to the proof.** To "put Jehovah to the proof" is a mark of unbelief (Ex. xvii. 7; Deut. vi. 16), but to refuse a proof which Jehovah Himself offers is an insult to the divine majesty which exhausts the patience of the Almighty.

13. Speaking under the deepest excitement, the prophet proceeds to unfold the consequences of such impenetrable hardness of heart.

Is it a small thing for you...] Trans. **Is it too little for you to**

14

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son,
And shall call his name Immanuel.

weary men (i.e. the prophet himself) **that ye weary, &c.** The *house of David* is addressed, perhaps because Isaiah had already experienced rebuffs from the royal princes, although none was so direct a defiance of God as this of Ahaz. *my God*] cf. *thy God* in v. 11. Ahaz has practically renounced the religion of Jehovah.

14—16. The sign of Immanuel. See Additional Note at the end of this chapter. **14.** *Therefore*] because of this act of unbelief. *the Lord himself*] The word is *Adonai*, as ch. vi. 1.

Behold, a virgin] (LXX. ἡ παρθένος, other Greek versions νεάνις.) The Hebrew word (*‘almāh*) means strictly “a young woman of marriageable age.” Both etymology and usage (cf. esp. Prov. xxx. 19; Cant. vi. 8) are adverse to the opinion, once prevalent among Christian interpreters and maintained by a few in recent times, that virginity is necessarily connoted (see Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, Revd. Ed. pp. 426 f.). To express that idea a different word (*bēthûlāh*) must have been employed, although even it might not be wholly free from ambiguity (? Joel i. 8). It is, of course, not disputed that *‘almāh* may be used of a virgin (as Gen. xxiv. 43; Ex. ii. 8); but even if this usage were more uniform than it is, it would still be far from proving that virginity was an essential of the notion. It would appear, therefore, that the idea of a miraculous conception was not present to Isaiah’s mind at this time, since a prediction of such astounding import must surely have been clothed in unambiguous language. Nor does the def. art., which is used in the original, necessarily denote a particular individual. (Cf. 2 Sam. xvii. 17, and see Davidson, *Synt.* § 21 e.) So far as grammar and context go, the expression may mean any young woman, fit to become a mother, whether as yet married or unmarried.

shall conceive, and bear a son] The same phrase in Gen. xvi. 11; Jud. xiii. 5. In the passage before us the verbs in the original are both participles, and might refer either to the present or the future. But it is doubtful if we can fairly apply one to the present and the other to the future, translating “*is with child and shall bear.*” Since the birth is certainly future, it seems natural to take the first verb in a future sense also.

and shall call] An archaic form, easily mistaken for 2nd pers. (so LXX. &c.). The mother names the child, as in Gen. iv. 1, 25; xix. 37 f.; xxix. 32, &c. An instructive parallel is the naming of the child Ichabod, born to Eli’s daughter-in-law on the dark day when the ark of God was taken and the glory departed from Israel (1 Sam. iv. 19—22).

Immanuel] “With us is God.” The battle-cry of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years War, “Gott mit uns,” was also Isaiah’s watchword for the coming crisis (cf. ch. viii. 8, 10); and like other great thoughts of his ministry he as it were gives it personal and concrete actuality by conceiving it as embodied in the name of a child.

Butter and honey shall he eat,
That he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. 15

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, 16
and choose the good,

The land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both
her kings.

The LORD shall bring upon thee,
And upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, 17

15. *Butter and honey shall he eat*] This has to be explained by *v.* 22, where the eating of butter (lit. "thick milk") and (wild) honey is a symptom of the primitive simplicity to which human life is reduced by the cessation of agriculture. The meaning is that the youth of Immanuel will be spent amidst the privations of a land laid waste by foreign invaders.]

that he may know] This is the rendering of the Vulgate and other ancient versions, and is maintained still by a few scholars. But the idea that eating butter and honey promotes the formation of ethical character is somewhat bizarre. Translate with R.V. **when he knoweth** (more precisely "towards the time when, &c."). It must be admitted, however, that *exact* parallels to this use of the preposition cannot be produced (though cf. Gen. xxiv. 63; Ex. xiv. 27). But what lapse of time is here indicated? The expression "refuse the evil and choose the good" must bear the same sense as in *v.* 16, and from ch. viii. 4 we see that the event predicted in *v.* 16 was expected to happen in a very short time,—within two or three years from the date of the interview with Ahaz. It would seem, therefore, that the phrase denotes the age at which a child begins to exercise intelligent choice between the pleasant and the painful (cf. 2 Sam. xix. 35). Most commentators, it is true, explain it of the development of moral consciousness, and think of a period of 10 or 12 years or even longer. But this introduces a needless discrepancy between this sign and that of viii. 4. There is nothing improbable in the supposition that Isaiah expected the Assyrian invasion of Judah (which of course is presupposed by *v.* 15) to happen simultaneously with the destruction of Samaria and Damascus.

16. The "for" seems to go back to *v.* 14: he shall be called "God with us," because whilst he is yet in infancy a signal deliverance shall be wrought.

the land that thou abhorrest...kings] Render: **the land before whose two kings thou cowerest shall be deserted**. The two "tails of smoking firebrands" shall have burned out. Ephraim and Syria are treated as one territory, ruled by the two allied kings.

17 gives the other aspect, the threatening aspect, of the sign Immanuel, interpreting *v.* 15. A calamity involving the king, the dynasty, and the nation, is the retribution appointed for the unbelief of Ahaz.

- Days that have not come,
 From the day that Ephraim departed from Judah;
Even the king of Assyria.
- 18 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the LORD shall hiss for the fly that *is* in the
 uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt,
 And for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria.
- 19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them
 In the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks,
 And upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.
- 20 In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor
 that is hired,
Namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of
 Assyria,
 The head, and the hair of the feet:

from the day...Judah] The revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam was the heaviest disaster that had ever befallen the house of David. The last words, *the king of Assyria*, may as many think be a gloss, but they are at least a correct gloss.

18—25. Further announcements (not addressed to Ahaz, but probably compiled from fragments of several of Isaiah's prophecies) of the Assyrian invasion (18—20) and its consequences (21—25).

18, 19. Judah, as the theatre of the inevitable duel between Assyria and Egypt for the mastery of Asia, must endure all the horrors of the double invasion.

18. *the LORD shall hiss...*] See ch. v. 26. The comparison of the Egyptians to flies and the Assyrians to bees is thoroughly appropriate, Egypt being infested with swarms of flies (xviii. 1), while Assyria was pre-eminently a land of bees. Dangerous enemies are compared to bees in Deut. i. 44; Ps. cxviii. 12. *the uttermost part*] (or "end") naturally suggests the Ethiopians, who however did not become masters of Egypt till B.C. 728. *the rivers* (strictly "Nile-arms") *of Egypt*] The word used is an Egyptian name for the Nile.

19. The figure is kept up. *desolate valleys*] rather, **precipitous ravines** (lit. "valleys of precipices"). *upon all thorns...bushes*] Render: **upon all the thorn-bushes** (lv. 13) **and upon all the pastures**. These are the places naturally frequented by insects.

20. A new figure for the degradation and impoverishment of Judah at the hands of Assyria. *In the same day*] **In that day**.

with a razor...river] Better: **with the razor hired beyond the river** (Euphrates). There may possibly be here an allusion to the "hiring" of Assyria by Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 7 f.); if so the prophecy is almost certainly later than vv. 1—17.

the king of Assyria] see on v. 17.

And it shall also consume the beard.

And it shall come to pass in that day,

That a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep;

And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk *that they* shall give he shall eat butter:

For butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

And it shall come to pass in that day,

That every place shall be,

Where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings,

It shall *even* be for briers and thorns.

With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither;

Because all the land shall become briers and thorns.

And *on* all hills that shall be digged with the mattock,

There shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns:

and it shall also consume the beard] **and even the beard** (the symbol of manly dignity) **it shall take away.**

21, 22. The land having gone out of cultivation, the sparse population is reduced to the pastoral life of the desert. Cf. ch. v. 14, 17, xxxii. 12—14.

22. *butter and honey* become the staple food of the country; in normal circumstances they were only eaten as delicacies along with bread and flesh (Gen. xviii. 8; 2 Sam. xvii. 29). Immanuel is the representative of the young generation nourished on this frugal fare (v. 15).

23—25. The most costly vineyards, requiring the most sedulous cultivation, are overrun by thorns and thistles, cf. ch. v. 6.

23. *a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings*] i.e. "silver shekels." Schrader reckons the silver shekel as equal to about half-a-crown of our money, which would make the price of the vineyard about £125. But the estimate neglects the important element of variation in the purchasing power of money. The traveller Burckhardt, who found it the custom in Syria to estimate the value of a vineyard according to the number of vines, tells us that good vines are valued at less than three pence each.

24. *With arrows and with bows*] the weapons of the hunter (Gen. xxvii. 3).

25. *And on all hills...mattock*] **And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with the mattock.** Such hills were the best sites for vineyards (ch. v. 2).

there shall not come thither the fear...] This could only mean, in the present connexion, that there would be no more anxiety about thorns, &c., because the place was hopelessly overgrown by them. It is better

But it shall be for the sending forth of oxen,
And for the treading of lesser cattle.

to render with R.V. **thou shalt not come thither for fear of, &c.**, although the construction is certainly harsh. Or the words might be taken as a continuation of the relative clause, thus: "And as for... mattock, *whither no fear of thorns, &c. used to come*, it shall be, &c." This is perhaps preferable.

for the sending forth of oxen] i.e. a place where oxen are sent forth (cf. ch. xxxii. 20). *the treading* (ch. v. 5) *of lesser cattle* (R.V. **sheep**).

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAP. VII. 14—16.

Probably no single passage of the Old Testament has been so variously interpreted or has given rise to so much controversy as the prophecy contained in these verses. The difficulties arise mainly from the fact that while the terms of the prediction are so indefinite as to admit a wide range of possibilities, we have no record of its actual fulfilment in any contemporary event. The purpose of this note will be to indicate the chief lines along which a solution has been sought for, and to consider how far they satisfy the conditions of a reasonable historical exegesis. But before entering on this survey, it will be well to enquire what sort of fulfilment the context would lead us to expect, or in other words what kind of sign would serve the immediate objects of the prophet's mission to Ahaz.

We are not entitled to assume as a matter of course that the sign here given will be in all respects such a sign as Ahaz might have asked at an earlier stage of the interview (v. 11). In the first place it need not involve an objective miracle, although a miracle of the most stupendous order was originally put within the option of Ahaz. Any of the senses in which the word "sign" is used (see on v. 11) in connexion with a prediction, would satisfy the requirements of v. 14. But further there is a presumption that the *import* of the sign will have been changed by what has taken place in the interval. Isaiah's first message to Ahaz is an unqualified assurance of deliverance from the designs of Rezin and Pekah, and the sign first offered would be a sign of that and that alone. The prospect of an Assyrian invasion was no doubt in the background of the prophet's horizon, but his message to Ahaz is complete in itself and takes no account of that final catastrophe. It is manifest, however, that in Isaiah's mind the whole aspect of affairs is altered by the king's refusal. The Assyrian invasion is brought into immediate connexion with the attack of the allies, and a new forecast of the future is presented by the prophet in which three great events follow closely on one another; (1) the collapse of the project of the allied princes, (2) the total destruction of Syria and Ephraim by the Assyrians, and (3) the devastation of Judah by the same ruthless conquerors. And the most natural supposition is that the new sign will be an epitome of this new and darker outlook, that is to say it will be a pledge at once of the immediate deliverance and of the judgment that lies behind it. Indeed

this view is so obviously implied by vv. 14—16 that we are shut up to it unless, with some critics, we remove v. 15 as an interpolation.

Now there are three features of the prediction in which the import of the sign may be looked for: (i) the birth of the child, (ii) his name, and (iii) his history. And of these three the last is certainly an essential element of the prophecy, as is shewn by vv. 15, 16. With regard to the other two we can only say that it is antecedently improbable that either of them should be without some special significance.

(i) If the import of the sign be sought mainly in the *birth* of the child it becomes almost necessary to assume that the terms of the prophecy point to something extraordinary and mysterious in the circumstances of the birth. This is the case with the traditional Christian interpretation, which finds in it a direct prediction of the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mother of our Lord. The chief support of this view has always been the authority of the Evangelist Matthew, who cites v. 14 in relating the birth of Jesus (i. 22, 23). But it must be observed that such a citation is not decisive as to the *original* sense of the passage, any more than Matt. ii. 15 determines the original sense of Hos. xi. 1. The great difficulty of the interpretation is that such an event could by no means serve the purpose of a sign to Ahaz. It may be freely admitted, in view of v. 11, that the expectation of a parthenogenesis is not too bold to be attributed to Isaiah in this moment of ecstatic inspiration. But if this be granted on the one hand it must be conceded on the other that he expected the miracle to be wrought in the immediate future; his language ("a virgin is about to conceive") implies that the prediction is on the eve of fulfilment, and the assurance in v. 16 is nugatory if the promised sign was not to happen for more than 700 years. Moreover, such an idea would require to be unambiguously expressed, and we have seen that the word '*almāh*' does not connote virginity in the strict sense. Whatever element of truth, therefore, may underlie this exegesis, it can scarcely be held to afford an adequate solution of the problem presented by the oracle in its primary and historical application.

(ii) Another class of explanations regards the event as a sign to Ahaz and nothing more, and of these we may examine first those which find the chief significance of the sign in the *naming* of the child. Perhaps the most persuasive presentation of this view is that given by Duhm. According to that expositor, the '*almāh*' is any young mother who may give birth to a child in the hour of Judah's deliverance from Syria and Ephraim. "God (is) with us" will be the spontaneous exclamation of child-bearing women in that time; and to such utterances at the moment of birth a certain oracular significance was attached, which caused them to be perpetuated in the name of the child. The child (or children) bearing the name Immanuel will grow up as a sign to Ahaz, first of the genuineness of Isaiah's inspiration, who foretold the event, and second of the yet future judgment threatened on the same occasion and his own rejection by Jehovah. To this theory no exception can be taken on grammatical or historical grounds. It is undoubtedly rendered easier by the excision of v. 15, which Duhm advocates. If that verse be retained one feels that the sign is rather overloaded by a circumstance which is

directly opposed to the meaning of the name. And apart from this there will perhaps remain an impression that justice has not been done to the emphasis with which the birth is announced. Why, on this view, should the mother be an '*almāh*—a young woman?

(iii) A third view (not to be sharply distinguished from ii) lays stress not so much on the birth or the naming as on the *history* of the child, which becomes a sort of chronological thread on which political events are strung. The meaning is: before the birth of a certain child Judah will have experienced a great deliverance (*v.* 14), before he has emerged from infancy, Syria and Ephraim will have disappeared (*v.* 16) and at a later stage of his development the land of Judah will be reduced to a pastoral wilderness (*v.* 15). An interesting parallel is found in the child Pollio in Vergil's fourth Eclogue, and another from the life of Mohammed has been lately pointed out by Mr Bevan¹. And as in these two cases a particular child is the subject of the sign, so here expositors have hazarded several guesses as to the identity of the '*almāh*. She has been supposed to be (*a*) the wife of Isaiah, either the mother of Shear-jashub, or a second wife (some identifying Immanuel with Maher-shalal-hash-baz, *ch.* viii. 3), (*b*) a damsel in the harem of Ahaz (the mother of Hezekiah is excluded by the chronology), or (*c*) a young woman among the bystanders, indicated by a gesture. None of these conjectures can be pronounced altogether happy. They are all alike discredited by a certain touch of vulgarity implied in the designation of some known individual as "the damsel."

An ingenious modification of the last two theories recently propounded by an American writer², differs from all others in excluding the prospect of deliverance from the import of the sign, whose significance is found in the *contrast* between the name of the child and his history. The name Immanuel embodies the religious optimism of the king and nation, their false trust in the protection of Jehovah; the hardships through which the child passes symbolise the providential course of events under which this delusive confidence must collapse. This interpretation, however, requires the excision of at least the latter part of *v.* 16, and also the rejection of *ch.* viii. 9, 10 as spurious.

(iv) Another line of exegesis which has commended itself to a large number of modern expositors starts from the idea that here for the first time the figure of the *personal Messiah* is flashed on Isaiah's mind. On this view the prophecy is invested with profound religious significance, which is not the case with the two last-mentioned theories. Face to face with the craven-hearted monarch who had betrayed his trust as guardian of the liberty and independence of Judah, the prophet receives this revelation of the true King, as one born to his people in the hour

¹ *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1893, pp. 220 ff. The incident is that of a Jew who was discoursing to an Arab tribe at Medina about the resurrection and the last judgment. "'But,' said they, 'what is the *sign* (āyat, Hebr. מֹפֶת) of this?' 'A prophet,' he answered, 'sent from that country yonder,' pointing with his hand towards Mecca and Yemen. 'But when,' they asked, 'do you think he will come?' Then he looked at me and said, 'If this boy reaches the full term of life, he will see him.' And in fact before another day had passed God sent His Apostle to dwell among us, and we believed on him, &c."

² F. C. Porter, in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. xiv. 1895, pp. 19—36.

of danger, sharing their poverty and affliction in his youth and waiting the time when "the government shall be upon his shoulder" and the perfect kingdom of God shall be established (ix. 6). The attention is concentrated on the mysterious personality of the child, that of the mother falls into the background. She may be some unknown daughter of the royal house, or a nameless maiden of lowly rank; the essential fact is that in the speedy advent of Immanuel, in his name, in his experience, men will recognise the God-given "sign" of the truth of the prophet's words. This on the whole seems to be the theory which affords the most adequate solution of the complex difficulties of the passage. It satisfies the claims of a truly historical interpretation, and at the same time it accounts, as none of the other modern theories do, for the impassioned fervour, the indefinable atmosphere of mystery and emotion with which the words are surrounded. It is no objection to it that the anticipation remained an unrealised ideal long after the opportunity for a sign to Ahaz had passed away; for a similar remark applies to the whole conception of a personal Messiah, whose appearance Isaiah certainly expected to synchronise with the Assyrian invasion. Not the least of its recommendations, indeed, is the fact that it brings this prophecy into line with the other great Messianic prophecies of ch. ix. 1—7 and xi. 1 ff.; and if the last words of ch. viii. 8 are rightly rendered "thy land, O Immanuel" (which however has been disputed, see on the verse below) a link would be supplied which would make the proof almost irresistible, since no ordinary child, born or unborn, could be naturally apostrophised as the owner of the land.

(v) An *allegorical* interpretation of the prophecy has been advanced by a few scholars, the "virgin" being taken as a personification of the Davidic house, or of the religious community, and the child either as the Messiah, or as a figure of the new generation; or else the birth is explained as merely a general symbol of deliverance. But all this is purely fanciful.

A few words may be added in conclusion on the pre-Christian acceptance of the passage. From a very early time it seems to have been recognised that a certain mystery clung to the words, that their significance was not exhausted by the circumstances in which they were originally spoken, but that they had an eschatological reference, pointing forward to the birth of the Messiah, as the wonderful event on which all the hope of the future hung. The first trace of this tendency is found in Mic. v. 3: "therefore will he (Jehovah) give them up until the time when a (certain) travailing woman hath brought forth, &c." These words can hardly be explained otherwise than as a reference to Is. vii. 14; and if it were certain that they were written by a contemporary of Isaiah they would go far to determine the sense in which the earlier prophecy should be understood. Since, however, they belong to a part of the book of Micah whose age is disputed, they may possibly represent a secondary application of Isaiah's prophecy rather than its primary intention. A further advance in the same direction appears to be indicated by the rendering of our passage in the LXX. It is almost incredible that the use of the word *παρθένος* for '*almāh*' in so important a connexion should be due to mere laxity on the part

of the translator. More probably it expresses a belief current in Jewish circles that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin. A good deal of evidence has been adduced to shew that such an expectation actually prevailed amongst both Alexandrian and Palestinian Jews¹, and if it existed it could hardly fail to influence the exegesis of this prophecy. It was only when the prophecy was appealed to by the Christians in proof of the Messiahship of Jesus that the Jewish exegetes seem finally to have repudiated the Messianic interpretation. They refused to admit that the word *‘almāh* could properly be translated “virgin” and fell back on one or other of the theories mentioned under (iii). The Christian Fathers on the other hand resolutely upheld the correctness of the LXX., although the post-Christian Greek versions of Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus agree in rendering the word by *παῖς*. The patristic view maintained an all but unquestioned ascendancy within the Church till the dawn of historical criticism in the eighteenth century, when it began to be recognised that on the philological question the Jews were right.

CHAP. VIII. 1—18. FURTHER ORACLES FROM THE TIME
OF THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITISH WAR.

The passage may be analysed as follows:—

i. *vv.* 1—4. The prophet, having utterly failed to influence the policy of the court (ch. vii. 1—17) is directed by Jehovah to impress his divinely inspired view of the situation on the public mind by two significant actions. First, he is to place in some conspicuous position a large tablet bearing in legible characters the ominous inscription LMHRSHLLHSHBZ; at the same time giving legal formality to the transaction by taking two prominent citizens as witnesses. Then the explanation of the word is given in connexion with the naming of a son born to him soon afterwards. It is a prophecy of the speedy overthrow of Ephraim and Syria by the king of Assyria. These actions are only intelligible at a time when the prediction was contrary to common expectation; hence they were performed *certainly* before the conquest of Damascus (732), and *probably* also before the embassy of Ahaz to Tiglath-pileser (2 Ki. xvi. 7).

ii. *vv.* 5—8. A prediction of the Assyrian invasion of Judah. The people who despise the softly flowing waters of Shiloah (the symbol of Jehovah’s invisible presence and government) shall be inundated by the waters of the Euphrates (a figure for the might of Assyria).

iii. *vv.* 9, 10. An oracle of very different import from the preceding. In an apostrophe to the nations of the world the prophet announces the frustration of all plans and combinations directed against the sovereign rule of Jehovah on mount Zion.

iv. *vv.* 11—15. Isaiah relates how in an hour of ecstasy he had experienced the strong pressure of the divine hand on his spirit, holding him aloof from the currents of public opinion which flowed around him, and constraining him to regulate his attitude by the constant thought of

¹ See Mr F. P. Badham’s letter in the *Academy* of 8 June, 1895.

Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great 8
roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-
shalal-hash-baz. And I took unto me faithful witnesses 2

God's presence; and along with this there were revealed to him the awful consequences of stumbling heedlessly against the purposes of Jehovah.

v. vv. 16—18. The prophet recognises that a chapter of his ministry has now closed. He is conscious that Jehovah has withdrawn the gracious guidance of the prophetic word which the nation has so emphatically rejected; and therefore he retires within the circle of his own adherents to wait for the fulfilment of his words. To these "disciples" he commits a record of the prophecies delivered during the crisis, while to the unbelieving people Jehovah has given pledges of His word in the names of the prophet and his two children.

It would be a mistake to look for a close logical connexion between these sections. They form a series of detached oracles, which followed each other at intervals like lightning flashes, illuminating for us the darkness of the political situation. Along with ch. vii. and probably also ch. vi., they constitute no doubt the chief part of the "testimony" which Isaiah "sealed up" among his disciples.

1—4. The twofold sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

1. Comp. ch. xxx. 8; Hab. ii. 2. *a great roll*] **a great tablet** (R.V.). The word is used in ch. iii. 23 of polished metal mirrors; here it means a smooth flat tablet of wood, stone or metal.

with a man's pen] i.e. "in common characters" (R.V. marg.) easily legible and understood by the people (Hab. ii. 2). Such a direction bears witness to an extensive knowledge of writing in Isaiah's time. The famous inscription in the Siloam tunnel, belonging probably to this age, is thought to have been carved by the workmen for their amusement.

Maher-shalal-hash-baz] That is, "**Haste-spoil-speed-booty.**" Synthetically the enigmatic legend is capable of more than one construction. Most probably the verbs are participles; and then the nouns may be either nominative to them, or in the accusative of direction. I.e. we may translate either "Spoil hasteneth—booty speedeth" or "Hasting to (the) spoil—speeding to (the) booty." The last seems preferable. (Comp. Goethe's *Raufbold*, *Habebald*, *Eilebeute* in the second part of *Faust*.)

concerning] is in Hebr. simply "to" or "for," a formula of dedication common on seals and epitaphs. The tablet relates to **Maher-shalal-hash-baz**.

2. *And I took*] The Hebr. pointing gives **and I will take** (as in R.V.). The speaker is still Jehovah. The LXX. and other old versions have the imperative ("and take for me") which, as addressed to the prophet, reads more naturally. Uriah the priest is mentioned in 2 Ki. xvi. 10 ff.; Zechariah is unknown, although the name occurs in the nearly contemporary notices of 2 Chron. xxvi. 5; xxix. 13. He has even been identified, somewhat rashly, with the author of Zech. ix.—xi.

- to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of
 3 Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she
 conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me,
 4 Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before the child
 shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother,
 the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be
 taken away before the king of Assyria.
 5 The LORD spake also unto me again, saying,
 6 Forsomuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah
 that go softly,
 And rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

on the ground of Zech. i. 1. It is not to be inferred that the two men were intimate friends of Isaiah, still less that they belonged to the band of his disciples (*v.* 16); they are called to witness simply as responsible public persons, trusted by the people.

3. *the prophetess*] Isaiah's wife is so called, not because she herself possessed the prophetic gift, but because the husband's designation is transferred by courtesy to the wife;—as a German might have said “die Frau Prophetin.”

4. The period here indicated, about a year, is of course shorter than in ch. vii. 16, the date of the prediction being about a year later.

5—8. The Assyrian invasion of Judah threatened.

6. *the waters of Shiloah*] According to Delitzsch the older and correct pronunciation is *Shillôah*. The *pool* of Siloam (Neh. iii. 15; John ix. 7, now called ‘*Ain Silwân*’) was situated on the south-west side of the Temple Mount, at the lower end of the Tyropœon valley. From a very ancient time it has been connected, by a rock-hewn tunnel, with an intermittent spring (St Mary's well) on the opposite (eastern) side of the hill, outside the wall. If this work had been executed before Isaiah's day there could be no reasonable doubt that it is referred to here. The name (from a verb meaning “send” John ix. 7) suggests an artificial channel, and the expression “that go softly” exactly describes the flow of the water along the easy gradient of the tunnel. Its execution, however, is very generally assigned to Hezekiah, on the ground of 2 Ki. xx. 20; 2 Chr. xxxii. 30; Eccclus. xlviii. 17. Whether this or some still more ancient aqueduct be intended, the point of the metaphor is that the waters, flowing “fast by the oracle of God,” are a type (not of the Davidic dynasty, but) of the silent unobtrusive presence and majesty of Jehovah, who “dwells in mount Zion” (*v.* 18: cf. Ps. xlv. 4).

and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son] If the text and translation be right, we must assume either (*a*) that “this people” does not refer to Judah, but to Ephraim or Ephraim and Syria together; or (*b*) that the people of Judah were secretly disaffected towards the house of David and sympathised with the design of the allied kings. But (*a*) “this people” most naturally means those who had refused the waters of Shiloah, the

Now therefore behold, the Lord bringeth up upon ,
them

The waters of the river, strong and many,
Even the king of Assyria, and all his glory :

And he shall come up over all his channels,

And go over all his banks :

And he shall pass through Judah ;

He shall overflow and go over,

He shall reach *even* to the neck ;

And the stretching out of his wings shall fill the
breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

people amongst whom the prophet was living (as in vv. 11, 12), i.e. the inhabitants of Judah ; while (*b*) is a supposition not probable in itself, and at variance with vii. 2, viii. 12. We might retain the present text and translate "rejoice *with* Rezin, &c.," i.e. rejoice in the same kind of things as Rezin, &c. rejoice in ; but this is extremely forced. The most likely explanation is that there has been a confusion between two words of similar sound ; and that what the prophet really wrote was not "rejoice in" but "faint before" (*msôs* instead of *msôs*). This presents itself as the easiest solution, although it may possibly require a change of the following preposition (perhaps *nippnê* instead of 'êth). Render, therefore, **and faint before Rezin, &c.** (cf. v. 12 and ch. vii. 2).

7. *Now therefore*] lit. "and therefore," introducing the apodosis ; a combination not found elsewhere.

bringeth up upon them] Not North Israel, but Judah, "this people."

the waters of the river] The Euphrates, explained in the next clause as a symbol of the Assyrian power. The figure of the verse is based on the fact that in summer the Euphrates overflows its banks,—an obvious emblem of the aggressive policy of the great world-power.

8. *And he shall pass through Judah*] Better as R.V., **And he shall sweep onward into Judah.** *overflow and go over* are rightly taken as synonyms (not as R.V.).

shall reach even to the neck] (cf. xxx. 28). Judah is in the utmost extremity of danger, yet is not wholly submerged.

shall fill...land] lit. "shall be the filling (as in ch. vi. 3) of the breadth of thy land." "Wings" cannot mean "masses of water branching off from the main current" ; nor is there any evidence that the Hebrews spoke of the "wings" of an army, as we do. The figure of the deluge seems abruptly changed to that of a huge bird of prey, overshadowing the whole land with its extended wings.

of thy land, O Immanuel] Without any change of the original consonantal text we might read, as at the end of v. 10, "...of the land. For with us is God !" The change is perhaps not imperatively required even if Immanuel be an ordinary child ; whereas, on the view that he is the Messiah, the apostrophe becomes natural. Still there remains a suspicion that the last part may be a gloss introduced from v. 10.

- 9 Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces;
And give ear, all ye of far countries:
Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces;
Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.
- 10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought;
Speak the word, and it shall not stand:
For God *is* with us.
- 11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand,
And instructed me that *I* should not walk in the way
of this people, saying,
- 12 Say ye not, A confederacy,

9, 10. The challenge of faith to the combined nations of the world.
Cf. Ps. ii. 1—6.

9. *Associate yourselves*] Rather: **Be exasperated**. A.V. follows the Targum and Vulgate, whose translation is based on a wrong grammatical analysis of the word (the root being *rā'a'*, not *rā'āh*).

and ye shall be broken in pieces] Lit.: **and be dismayed**,—a consecutive imperative (Davidson, *Synt.* § 64), forming the apodosis of a conditional sentence.

gird yourselves] for battle against the cause of Jehovah.

10. *Take counsel...nought*] "If ye resolve on a scheme it shall be frustrated." *Speak the word*] **a word**, i.e. "proclaim your resolution."

For God is with us] See on v. 8.

11—15. Isaiah was able to stand alone against the nation during this crisis, because he knew that his thoughts were controlled by a Power not his own.

11. *with a strong hand*] Better: **while the Hand** (of Jehovah) **grasped (me)**, (an infinitive construction). The phrase (cf. Ezek. iii. 14) refers to a prophetic trance, in which the true view of the aspects and issue of the situation was borne in upon Isaiah's mind with irresistible force. His mind was as it were fixed in one direction, and he was henceforth proof against the disturbing influences of social opinion around him.

and instructed me...walk] Or, **to warn me against walking**. Grammatically, the clause is a continuation, not of the main sentence ("and Jehovah spake, &c."), but of the infinitive construction, which is here resolved into the Imperfect (Qal). *the way of this people*] the prevailing emotions, thoughts and resolves of the hour.

12. *A confederacy*] Strictly: **A conspiracy** (R.V.). But the word "conspiracy" does not necessarily imply (as some have thought) treason within the state. It may be used (as the verb is in Neh. iv. 2) of an external coalition threatening the integrity of the commonwealth. On the whole this seems to give the best sense here. The "conspiracy" is the Syro-Ephraimitish alliance, which Isaiah and his adherents are

To all *them* to whom this people shall say, A confederacy;

Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself;

And *let him be* your fear, and *let him be* your dread. 13

And he shall be for a sanctuary;

But for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, 14

For a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, 15

warned not to treat as a serious danger. Another explanation is that Isaiah and his party were suspected of treasonable complicity in the designs of the allies (cf. Jer. xxxvii. 13); but did they need a supernatural revelation to tell them that that charge was false? The word has also been supposed to allude to the spirit of preternatural suspicion that was abroad, causing every man to suspect his neighbour of being a traitor. But Isaiah is little likely to have been disturbed by this.

neither fear ye their fear] i.e. "fear not what they fear," but fear Jehovah alone (v. 13).

13. Render: **Jehovah of Hosts, Him shall ye count holy, and let Him be (the object of) your fear and (of) your terror.** "Count holy" (xxix. 23); recognise as the Holy One, especially by absolute trust in His providential disposition of events; fearing only what would offend Him.

14. To those who obey this admonition, Jehovah *shall be* for a sanctuary; to all others a stumbling-stone. This contrast would certainly be clearer if (with the Targ. and Vulg.) we might insert "to you" after "shall be." But the want of these words hardly justifies us in changing the text, or even in translating "He will shew Himself a holy object," in the sense explained by the remainder of the verse. Although it is doubtful if the word is ever used for "asylum," yet the sanctuary was in fact an asylum (Ex. xxi. 14; 1 Ki. i. 50, ii. 28, 30), and there is no great improbability in supposing that that idea is expressed here.

Two figures are used to set forth the threatening side of Jehovah's relation to *both the houses of Israel*: the *stone* against which one heedlessly stumbles to one's own destruction; and the *snare* in which a wild animal is caught unawares. Jehovah is a secret and sudden danger to those who walk in blind unbelief. Cf. Ps. xviii. 26.

15. *many among them*] Not all; a "Remnant shall turn" and be saved: *how*, is more fully shewn in the next verses. The expressions of this verse are reproduced with little variation in ch. xxviii. 13. They are frequently alluded to in the N.T. (Luke ii. 34; Matt. xxi. 44; Rom. ix. 33).

And be snared, and be taken.

- 16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.
 17 And I will wait upon the LORD,
 That hideth his face from the house of Jacob,
 And I will look for him.
 18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD
 hath given me
 Are for signs and for wonders in Israel

16—18. The prophet, recognising the failure of his work as regards the nation, prepares a written record of his teaching, and deposits this as a sealed document in the custody of his disciples. By this solemn act he forms an inner circle of religious fellowship, which is the nucleus of the new people of God. See General Introd. p. xxxi.

16. Cf. ch. xxx. 8; Dan. xii. 4. *Bind up...seal*] The imperatives can only be understood as a command of Jehovah to Isaiah, as in *vv.* 1 ff. But in the next verse Isaiah himself is the speaker, and since the change of person is somewhat abrupt, the suggestion deserves consideration that the two verbs are *infs. abs.* (wrongly vocalised). We might then translate: "(I will) bind up...(I will) seal."

the testimony...the law] *testimony...instruction* (see on i. 10). Both words are here used of the contents of the revelations communicated to the prophet during these months of danger and anxiety; the former describes more particularly the evidential character of the predictions, the latter refers to the practical element in the revelation (as in vii. 4—9, viii. 11—13).

among my disciples] i.e. those who had received the prophet's message, and rallied round him as their spiritual guide.

17. *that hideth his face...*] A very common expression for Jehovah's anger: Deut. xxxi. 17 f.; Mic. iii. 4; Jer. xxxiii. 5; Ps. xiii. 1, xlv. 24; Job xiii. 24, &c. The special mark of displeasure which Isaiah has in view is the cessation of those admonitions and warnings which Jehovah had sent through him to the people.

will look for him] Better: **will hope in Him**. The counsel which the nation and the king rejected becomes the rule of the prophet's own life.

18. *I and the children whom the LORD hath given me*] Like Hosea, Isaiah had been directed to embody leading ideas of his teaching in the names of at least two of his children, *Shear-jashub* and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. His own name, also, though not an uncommon one, expresses what we may regard as the most comprehensive idea of his theology—"Jehovah saves." He and they are thus **for signs and portents** (cf. ch. xx. 3 and see on vii. 11) in Israel; the children especially cannot be seen or named without recalling to mind prophetic utterances of profound import.

From the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them¹⁹ that have familiar spirits,
And unto wizards that peep, and that mutter :

which dwelleth in mount Zion] This conception seems to have first emerged in Isaiah's teaching at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war, when Jerusalem was threatened by a foreign army. We have here perhaps the earliest anticipation of what became afterwards a fixed element of his prophecy—the inviolability of Jerusalem, the earthly seat of Jehovah's throne.

CHAP. VIII. 19—IX. 7. ESOTERIC PROPHECIES OF THE FUTURE
ADDRESSED TO ISAIAH'S DISCIPLES.

The prophet, having now discontinued and "sealed up" his public "testimony," appears to address himself in what follows to his own immediate followers. The passage presents, in vivid contrast, two pictures; one of the darkness and despair that are settling down on the incorrigible nation, the other of the light and joy that are to break upon it with the advent of the Messianic salvation. "The morning cometh and also the night" (ch. xxi. 12).

i. vv. 19—22. The night of despair and affliction. The whole of this section is unusually obscure, but two features can be clearly recognised, corresponding to the double prophecy in ch. vi. 9—12.

(1) Spiritual darkness, the people resorting to necromancy, &c., in default of a true revelation (19, 20). This we may regard as a symptom of the last stage of the hardening of heart foretold in vi. 9 f.

(2) Outward distress: men roaming through a dreary land, maddened by hunger, and seeking relief in vain (21, 22). The fulfilment of vi. 11 f.

Ch. ix. 1 (in the Hebr. viii. 23) is a transition verse.

ii. Ch. ix. 2—7. The dawn of the Messianic age.

(1) The light and joy of the great deliverance (2, 3).

(2) The manner of the deliverance: the overthrow of the Assyrian tyrant (4, 5).

(3) The advent of the Messianic King (6, 7).

19, 20. Religion and superstition contrasted.

19. *And when they* (the infatuated, God-forsaken people) *shall say unto you* (believers in divine revelation).

them that have familiar spirits] Hebr. simply *hā'ōbhōth*. Strictly, the 'ōbh is the "familiar spirit" itself (Lev. xx. 27, &c.), i.e. the disembodied spirit after death; the necromancer or "medium" through whom it holds communication with the living is *ba'al 'ōbh* or *ba'alath 'ōbh* (1 Sam. xxviii. 8)—the possessor of an 'ōbh.

wizards that peep, and that mutter] "Wizards," lit. "knowing ones," practitioners of an occult science. *Peep* (i.e. chirp) and *mutter* refer to the

Should not a people seek unto their God?
For the living to the dead?

20 To the law and to the testimony:

If they speak not according to this word,
It is because there is no light in them.

21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry:

And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves,

And curse their king and their God, and look upward.

22 And they shall look unto the earth;

faint voice, like that of a little bird, which antiquity ascribed to the shades of the departed: "The sheeted dead did *squeak* and *gibber* in the streets of Rome." See ch. xxix. 4, where the word "peep" is again used, and comp. Aen. vi. 492 f.; Il. xxiii. 101. The LXX. (τοὺς ἐν-γαστριμύθους and οἱ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας φωνοῦσιν) suggests that the voice of the ghost was imitated by ventriloquism, which is not unlikely.

should not a people...dead?] This seems to be the answer which the prophet's disciples are to return to the people.

for the living to the dead?] i.e. "should one enquire of the dead (ghost) on behalf of the living?"

20. *To the law and to the testimony*] See on v. 16. Apparently an exclamation of the distracted people (see on next clause).

The remainder of the verse, where the construction is very difficult, ought probably to be rendered: **surely they shall speak according to this word when there is no dawn** (i.e. no hope) **for them** (lit. him). The meaning is that the people will seek direction from the "sure word of prophecy," but only when it is too late. But the original is so obscure that no great confidence can be placed in any translation.

21, 22. Another scene, representing the utter desolation of the land, and the miseries of the survivors.

21. *they shall pass through it*] Obviously, the land; but something must have fallen out before this verse, to account for the reference of the pronoun. Throughout this and the following verse, "they," "their," "themselves," should be "he," "his," "himself." The subject is either the whole nation or an individual Israelite. He wanders through the land, perhaps seeking an oracle (Am. viii. 12).

they shall fret themselves] Better: **he shall break out in anger** (the form is used only here).

curse his king and his God] Not "his king and God" whether Jehovah or a false god; but the king because he cannot, and God because He will not, help. Cf. 2 Ki. vi. 26 f. (see also 1 Ki. xxi. 10). This gives a much better sense than "curse *by* his king and his God," although the parallel passages are in favour of the latter translation.

22. The last words of the previous verse should be taken along with this one: **and he shall look upward and shall look to the earth: and**

And behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish;
And *they shall be* driven to darkness.

Nevertheless the dimness *shall not be* such as *was* in 9
her vexation,

When at the first he lightly afflicted the land of
Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,

And afterward did more grievously afflict *her by* the
way of the sea,

Beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

behold, &c. Whether he look to heaven or earth, no ray of hope shall appear (cf. ch. v. 30).

trouble and darkness...] Render with R.V. **distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish.** The word here translated "gloom" is slightly different in form from that in ix. 1, and does not occur again.

and they shall...darkness] Probably: **and he shall be chased into thick darkness.** A somewhat similar phrase in Jer. xxiii. 12. Others render: "and darkness shall be driven (upon him)"; others: "but (the) darkness shall be dispelled."

IX. 1. *Nevertheless...vexation*] Lit. **For (there is) no gloom to her that (is) in straitness.** The sentence is an enigma. Duhm translates it as a question and regards it as the gloss of a reader who with difficulty had made up his mind that the "gloom" is metaphorical and justified his conclusion thus: "For is there not gloom to (a land) that is in straits?" It is a nice question whether the ancient scholiast or the modern commentator displays the greater subtlety here. If the words are retained in the text we must supply a different tense in the two members, as R.V. "But (for) there *shall be* no gloom to her that *was* in anguish."

when at the first...more grievously afflict her] Begin a new sentence and render as R.V. **In the former time he brought into contempt... but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, &c.,** or (since the words for "land" have the acc. termination), "brought contempt on the land...brought honour to it." The subject is Jehovah.

the land of Zebulun...Naphtali] Lower and Upper Galilee.

the way of the sea] either "in the direction of the (Mediterranean) Sea," or "the region along the West side of the Sea of Gennesareth." In the time of the Crusades *Via Maris* was the name of the road leading from Acre to Damascus.

beyond Jordan] the land of Gilead (2 Ki. xv. 29).

in Galilee of the nations] (omit "in") **the circuit of the nations.** Although the Hebrew word (*Gālîl*) is the origin of the later "Galilee," the district to which it was applied in the O.T. was only the northernmost corner of what was afterwards Upper Galilee (see 1 Ki. ix. 11; Josh. xx. 7, xxi. 32; 2 Ki. xv. 29).

These remote provinces are singled out for special mention because they were the first to be depopulated by Tiglath-pileser (2 Ki. xv. 29),

- 2 The people that walked in darkness have seen
a great light:
They that dwell in the land of the shadow of
death, upon them hath the light shined.
- 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and* not increased
the joy:
They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest,
And as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.
- 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the
staff of his shoulder,
The rod of his oppressor, as *in* the day of Midian.

those parts of the land, therefore, on which the reproach of foreign dominion will have lain longest when the Deliverance comes. The prophecy acquired a new and surprising significance when the "good news of the Kingdom" began to be proclaimed by our Lord first in Galilee (Matt. iv. 13 ff.). But the following verses (vv. 2—7) refer of course to the whole nation.

2, 3. The sudden change of style is remarkable; all at once the prophecy breaks into a strain of rapturous and animated poetry, which is sustained to the close. In the Hebr. ch. ix. begins here.

2. *have seen*] the perfects throughout are those of prophetic certainty; the writer is transported into the future.

the shadow of death] Heb. *ṣal-māvēth*, usually held by scholars to be a corruption of *ṣalmūth* (= "shadow" simply). But the traditional etymology is forcibly defended by Nöldeke in *Zeitschr. f. A. T. Wiss.*, 1897, pp. 183 f.

3. *and not increased the joy*] Lit., "unto it thou hast increased the joy." *Lō*, "not" and *lō*, "to it," being pronounced alike, are sometimes confused in the text of the O.T. There is no reason for assuming such a confusion here, and R.V. ("thou hast increased their joy") rightly adheres to the Massoretic text. But it is still better to adopt a very simple emendation, approved by many expositors (הגילה for הגוילה) and translate: **Thou hast multiplied the exultation; thou hast increased the joy.**

before thee] as at the festivals in the sanctuary, a phrase often used in Deuteronomy (xii. 7, xiv. 26, &c.).

the joy in harvest] Ps. iv. 8, cxxvi. 5, 6.

as men rejoice when they divide the spoil] cf. ch. xxxiii. 23; Jud. v. 30; Ps. cxix. 162. For "rejoice" read **exult**.

4, 5. The destruction of the oppressor.

4. Change the order as in R.V. **For the yoke of his burden, &c.... thou hast broken.**

the staff of his shoulder] (better **back**) means the staff with which his back was beaten; the pronouns refer to Israel.

rod of his oppressor] **task-master**, as in Ex. v. 6.

in the day of Midian] when the dominion of the Midianites was forever broken (Jud. vii.; cf. Is. x. 26). "Day" here means "day of

For every battle of the warrior *is* with confused noise, ⁵
 And garments rolled in blood;
 But *this* shall be with burning *and* fuel of fire.
 For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: ⁶
 And the government shall be upon his shoulder:
 And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
 The mighty God,

battle," as often in Arabic. The Arabs speak of the hero of many fights as *dhu-l'ayyâmîn*, "master of days."

5. The verse reads: **For every boot of him that tramped noisily, and (every) garment rolled in blood, shall be for burning, as fuel for the fire.** The word *šē'ôn* is Aramaic and signifies a military boot; that rendered "tramped" (*šē'en*) is a denominative formed from it. The idea of the verse is that after Jehovah's great victory every vestige of war shall be burned up in preparation for the kingdom of universal peace. Comp. the burning of the weapons of Gog's host in Ezek. xxxix. 9 f.

6, 7. The last and greatest cause of joy is the birth of the Messiah and his wonderful character and government. When Isaiah expected the event to take place, cannot be gathered from this prophecy. There is no reason for supposing that the reference is to a child already born; the perfect tense is used, as throughout the passage, from the ideal standpoint of the writer, which is within the Messianic age. The birth of the child is most naturally conceived as taking place in the age of miracle which succeeds the overthrow of the Assyrian; hence no part is assigned to him in effecting the national emancipation.

6. *unto us*] the survivors of the judgment. Cf. "Immanuel," "God with us."

the government] This word is found only here and in v. 7, and is of uncertain interpretation, perhaps "princedom."

his name shall be called] The name of the Messiah consists of a series of honorific titles, pertaining to Him in His kingly capacity and expressing mainly the qualities displayed in His government. We may compare, with Guthe and others, the high-sounding titles assumed by Egyptian and Babylonian monarchs in their inscriptions, such as, "Giver of Life in perpetuity," "Ever Living," "Lord of Life," "Lord of Eternity and Infinity" &c.

Wonderful, Counsellor] Since each of the other names is compounded of two words, these expressions are also to be taken together as forming a single designation—**Wonder-Counsellor**. The construction is either construct followed by genitive—"a wonder of a Counsellor" (cf. Gen. xvi. 12), or acc. governed by participle—"one who counsels wonderful things." Cf. "wonderful in counsel" (of Jehovah) in ch. xxviii. 29. On counsel as the function of a king, see Mic. iv. 9.

The mighty God] (*'él Gibbôr*) either "God-like Hero" or **Hero-God**. The second is to be preferred, because the title is applied to Jehovah in ch. x. 21 (cf. Deut. x. 17; Jer. xxxii. 18). These two titles ascribe to

The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace there
shall be no end,

Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom,
To order it, and to stablish it with judgment and with
justice

From henceforth even for ever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

the Messiah the two fundamental virtues of a ruler, wisdom and strength (cf. ch. xi. 2), both in superhuman measure. The predicate of divinity (like that of eternity in the next name) is not to be understood in the absolute metaphysical sense; it means that the divine energy works through him and is displayed in his rule (cf. xi. 2 ff.; Mi. v. 4; Zech. xii. 8). In the fulfilment the words receive a larger sense.

The remaining two titles describe the character of the Messiah's government, as (a) paternal, and (b) peaceful.

The everlasting Father] lit. **Father of Eternity**. The translation "Father of booty" is grammatically unimpeachable (see ch. xxxiii. 23; Gen. xlix. 27), but the ideas of fatherhood and booty form an unnatural association. "Father of Eternity" describes the king, not as "possessor of the attribute of eternity" but as one who continually acts as a father to his people.

Prince of Peace] Cf. ch. ii. 2—4, xi. 4 ff.; Mic. v. 5; Zech. ix. 10.

7. The extension and consolidation of the Messiah's rule.

Of the increase...end] Rather, **For the increase of authority and for peace without end**, &c. The final M (𐤌) in the original points to some uncertainty of text, which can also be traced in the translation of the LXX. It is thought by some to have arisen through dittography of the last two letters of v. 6; v. 7 would then begin "increased is authority." But the Qērē gives the better sense.

upon the throne...kingdom] **On the throne and kingdom of David**. The Messiah succeeds to David's throne and is doubtless conceived as his lineal descendant.

to order it] Better, **to confirm it**. The throne is established (Prov. xx. 28; Is. xvi. 5) not by force and conquest but by the moral qualities of **judgment and righteousness** (see ch. i. 21) in the government.

the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this] exactly as ch. xxxvii. 32. The word "zeal" or "jealousy" is used of *passion* in a variety of senses, but chiefly with the implied idea of *resentment*. When applied to Jehovah it appears always to express the reaction of His holiness called forth by some injury to His honour. Perhaps the closest parallel to the idea here is Zech. i. 14, viii. 2 "I am jealous *for* Zion with a great jealousy."

CHAP. IX. 8—X. 4 (+ V. 25—30).

JEHOVAH'S HAND STRETCHED OUT IN WRATH OVER HIS PEOPLE. AN ORACLE AGAINST NORTH ISRAEL.

The key-note of the prophecy is given in the recurrent refrain—ix. 12, 17, 21, x. 4, v. 25. (On the reasons for including ch. v. 25—30 see on that passage.) It is the most artistically arranged of all Isaiah's writings, being divided into regular strophes as follows:—

(i) Ch. ix. 8—12. The introduction (vv. 8—10) explains that the oracle concerns the inhabitants of Samaria, and points to the buoyant assurance and self-confidence which was the habitual temper of the Northern Kingdom. The prophet then enters on a review of the various calamities by which Jehovah had sought to bring the nation to repentance, the first of these being the aggressions of its powerful neighbours on the East and the West (vv. 11, 12). This was the first stroke of Jehovah's hand.

(ii) vv. 13—17. A second blow descends on the impenitent nation in some sudden disaster by which the state is bereft of its leaders, great and small (13—16); the condition of the people is then seen to be utterly corrupt, so that Jehovah withdraws His compassion even from the helpless widows and orphans (17).

(iii) vv. 18—21. The third visitation is a state of anarchy and internecine strife, which is described mainly in a succession of powerful and telling images. The nation is rent by the conflict of rival factions, the only bond of unity being a common hatred of Judah.

(iv) Ch. x. 1—4. The fourth strophe opens with a "Woe" on the maladministration of the judges, which was always to Isaiah's mind the chief symptom of a rotten republic (vv. 1, 2). This is followed by an allusion to a day of slaughter in which the magnates shall vainly seek safety beneath the slain (3, 4).

[It is possible that another strophe originally stood here, the closing words of which are preserved in v. 25.]

(v) Ch. v. 26—30. The prediction of the Assyrian invasion forms, as has been already explained, the *dénouement* of this great drama of judgment. (For the exegesis, see on the passage above, pp. 40—42.) The refrain is of course dropped; Jehovah's wrath is stayed, His hand is no longer stretched forth.

It is assumed in the foregoing analysis that the passage is in the main (down at least to the end of ch. ix.) a *retrospect* of historical judgments; and this is the view naturally suggested by the tenses of the original, which are with few exceptions perfects, or the equivalents of perfects. A majority of commentators, however, taking the perfects as those of prophetic certainty, interpret the oracle as an ideal delineation of the stages of a judgment yet to come. And it is no doubt conceivable that the prophet might assume an ideal standpoint on the eve of the Assyrian invasion, regarding the preliminary chastisements as past, although they were in reality still future at the time of writing. But such a lavish and continuous use of the prophetic perfect would be unparalleled; and the change to the impf. at v. 26 seems too significant to be explained on

- 8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob,
And it hath lighted upon Israel.
9 And all the people shall know,
Even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria,
That say in the pride and stoutness of heart,
10 The bricks are fallen down, but we will build *with*
hewn stones:

this hypothesis. It is, therefore, on the whole safer to assume that in ix. 8—21 the references are to past events, although it may not be possible in every case to specify the exact circumstances that are meant. A shorter oracle arranged on the principle here supposed is found in Am. iv. 6—12.

The date of the prophecy is not easily determined. The most probable view is that it was composed just before the outbreak of the Syro-Ephraimitish war. A later date (though not perhaps impossible) is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the issues of that expedition, so disastrous to the Northern Kingdom, are not mentioned. The Assyrians, moreover, are described in terms so vaguely poetic as to suggest that they were as yet unknown to the Israelites at close quarters. Syria also is mentioned as the enemy of Israel, without any hint of an alliance between them; while it is thought by some that v. 21 alludes to the incipient antagonism towards Judah which afterwards found vent in the invasion. None of these indications are very decisive, but there are none to neutralise them (see, however, on vv. 10 and 11 below); and the passage may at least be regarded provisionally as a product of the earliest period of Isaiah's ministry.

8—12. The first strophe (vv. 8—10 being an introduction to the whole prophecy).

8. Translate: **A word hath the Lord sent into Jacob and it shall light upon Israel.** "The Word is in nature and history the messenger of the Lord" (Del.) cf. Ps. cvii. 20, cxlvii. 15, 18; Is. lv. 11. The "word" here is the following oracle, which has already been "sent," and will "light" (cf. Dan. iv. 31) on Israel, bringing about its own fulfilment.

Jacob...Israel] here denote the Northern Kingdom, as is plain from the next verse.

9. *shall know*] i.e. by its effects; Hos. ix. 7.

that say] lit. "saying," i.e. "as follows." A verb seems to have dropped out; [**for they boast**] **in pride and stoutness of heart saying.**

10. It has been conjectured that these words are a fragment of a drinking song actually sung in Ephraim. They express the spirit of bravado which prevailed in the northern capital, cf. Am. vi. 13; Hos. vii. 9, 10. It is, therefore, not necessary to refer them to any particular recent reverses, such as the inroads of Assyria which punished the ill-timed attack on Judah. From the time of the Syrian wars there had been abundant "occasion to use this proverb in Israel."

hewn stones] Cf. Am. v. 11.

The sycomores are cut down, but we will change *them* into cedars.

Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of ¹¹ Rezin against him,

And join his enemies together;

The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind;

And they shall devour Israel with open mouth.

For all this his anger is not turned away,

But his hand *is* stretched out still.

12

sycomores] The wood of the mulberry-fig, spongy but exceedingly durable, is still the cheapest and commonest building material in Palestine, cf. 1 Ki. x. 27.

11, 12. The first blow of Jehovah's hand—loss of territory.

11. *Therefore the LORD shall set up*] Transl. **And (so) Jehovah exalted.** *The adversaries of Rezin* must, if the text be correct, denote the Assyrians. But this is not a natural designation (especially if the prophecy was written *before* the Syro-Ephraimitish coalition); and it is inconsistent with v. 12, unless, indeed, we suppose that there Syrians are referred to as auxiliaries in the Assyrian army, which is extremely improbable. Several codd. read "princes of Rezin"; but this is hardly less objectionable. It seems necessary to delete "Rezin" as a gloss and read simply **his (Israel's) adversaries.**

and join...together] Rather, **and stirred up his enemies** (frequentative impf.) cf. ch. xix. 2.

12. *The Syrians...behind*] Or, **Syria on the East and the Philistines on the West** (R.V. marg.).

and they shall devour] **and they devoured.**

There is no historic record of Philistine aggression on the kingdom of Ephraim (at least since 1 Ki. xv. 27); nor is there any mention of a Syrian attack about the time when this passage was written. It is probable that the prophet is looking further back, to the protracted Syrian wars, from Ahab to Jeroboam II., which formed a distinct and memorable episode in the history of N. Israel.

For all this...stretched out still] "One of the most effective refrains that have ever been composed." (Duhm.) The figure of Jehovah, with His arm stretched out in wrath, is kept before the mind of the reader, as the prophecy advances to its conclusion.

13—17. Second strophe. It describes a "day" of terror (which may be either a battle or a revolution) in which the leaders of the people suddenly perished. What incident is referred to cannot be determined; royal assassinations were frequent after the death of Jeroboam II. (see 2 Ki. xv. 10, 14, 25), and these would naturally be accompanied by such a massacre of the King's supporters as is here spoken of (cf. ch. iii. 1—4). See also the graphic, though obscure, description of a conspiracy in Hos. vii. 3—7.

- 13 For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them,
Neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.
- 14 Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail,
Branch and rush, *in* one day.
- 15 The ancient and honourable, he *is* the head;
And the prophet that teacheth lies, he *is* the tail.
- 16 For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err;
And *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed.
- 17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men,
Neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows:
For every one *is* a hypocrite and an evildoer,
And every mouth speaketh folly.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.

13. *For the people turneth not]* But the people turned not. *him that smiteth them]* him that smote them. *do they seek]* did they seek.

14. Render: And (so) Jehovah cut off from Israel head and tail, palm-branch and rush, in one day. *head and tail]* i.e. leader and follower, a proverbial expression, like the next phrase.

15 is almost universally regarded as an erroneous explanation of v. 14 and therefore a gloss; but this is not quite certain. False prophets were frequently guilty of following where they pretended to lead (1 Ki. xxii. 6; Ezek. xiii. 10) and might be very appropriately described as the "tail." The verse may be objected to on account of its somewhat prosaic character, but the strophe is not complete without it.

The ancient and honourable] see on iii. 2, 3.

16. Render: And the leaders of this people have become misleaders, and they of it that are led are swallowed up (or perhaps as iii. 12 confused).

17. A sentence of utter rejection. The unwonted severity of the threat against the widows and orphans is justified by the universal corruptness of the nation.

a hypocrite] Rather, profane (R.V.), "impious." Cf. ch. x. 6, xxxii. 6, xxxiii. 14; Job viii. 13; Ps. xxxv. 16.

every mouth speaketh folly] ch. xxxii. 6 ("villany" A.V.). In the O.T. folly and wickedness are practically synonymous.

18—21. Third strophe. As in ch. iii. 1—7, the removal of the pillars of the state is followed by wild confusion and civil war. The state of things alluded to can be partly realised from passages in the book of Hosea, e.g. iv. 2, v. 11 f., vi. 8 f., vii. 7, x. 3, 13; and cf. 2 Ki. xv. 23—25.

For wickedness burneth as the fire: 18
It shall devour the briers and thorns,
And shall kindle in the thickets of the forest,
And they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke.
Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land 19
darkened,
And the people shall be as the fuel of the fire:
No man shall spare his brother.
And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; 20
And he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not
be satisfied:
They shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:
Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: 21
And they together shall be against Judah.

18. The smouldering embers of wickedness burst out in a raging fire: see Hosea's image of the oven, vii. 4, 6.

For wickedness...thickets] Render, **For wickedness burned like a fire that consumes thorns and thistles, and it set fire to the thickets, &c.**, cf. x. 17, 18. Both wickedness and the punishment of it are likened to an unquenchable fire; Job xxxi. 12; Deut. xxxii. 22. First the thorns and thistles are kindled, then the fire catches the trees.

they shall mount...smoke] **and they roll upward in a pillar of smoke**; lit. "a lifting up of smoke." The word for "roll upward" does not occur again; it contains an alliteration with that for "thickets."

19. *darkened*] Another translation is "made to glow"; the word is not found elsewhere.

no man sparing his brother. The clause shews that the fire is an emblem of ungovernable party strife. The sense would be still clearer if we could adopt Duhm's hazardous emendation in the preceding clause so as to make it read "and the people became like man-eaters (cannibals)."

20. **And one snatched on the right hand and was hungry (still) and devoured on the left hand and they were not satisfied, &c.**

every man the flesh of his own arm] The image would be that of men maddened with hunger and gnawing their own flesh. The words are reproduced exactly, with the omission of a single letter, in Jer. xix. 9, which gives the sense "every man the flesh of his neighbour." It might be better to assimilate the text here to that reading, since it is the "cruelty of rival factions" that seems to be described.

21. *Manasseh, Ephraim...Manasseh*] Ancient tribal jealousies would naturally be revived in a period of anarchy and civil war. Something of this kind seems to be implied in the account of the accession of the usurper Pekah, who murdered Pekahiah, at the head of a band of fifty Gileadites (2 Ki. xv. 25). The tribal names, however, need not be taken quite literally; indeed it is hardly probable that the tribes had preserved their separate identity to so late a time.

For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.

- 10 Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees,
And that write grievousness *which* they have prescribed;
2 To turn aside the needy from judgment,
And to take away the right from the poor of my
people,
That widows may be their prey,
And *that* they may rob the fatherless.
3 And what will ye do in the day of visitation,
And in the desolation *which* shall come from far?
To whom will ye flee for help?
And where will ye leave your glory?
4 Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners,
And they shall fall under the slain.

1—4. Fourth strophe. Most critics consider that at this point the scene changes from Samaria to Jerusalem; (1) because the internal condition of Ephraim has already been depicted in the last stages of dissolution and (2) because the abuses here denounced are a constant feature of Isaiah's prophecies against Judah. In the absence of positive indications these reasons are hardly sufficient to justify so abrupt a transition. It would be more plausible to hold with Giesebrecht and others that the strophe had its place originally among the "woes" of ch. v.; but this also seems unnecessary.

1. *that decree unrighteous decrees, &c.*] Better perhaps, **that draw up mischievous ordinances and are continually writing oppression**. The magnates are addressed not as judges but as legislators; their offence is that they embody injustice in arbitrary written enactments, which enable them to perpetrate the most grievous wrongs under legal forms.

and that write...prescribed] The construction is peculiar. The intensive form of the verb "to write" occurs only here.

2. The effect and real purpose of this legislative activity.

To turn aside the needy from judgment] See on ch. i. 23.

my people] as iii. 12, 15.

3. The unjust lawgivers are reminded that there is a day of revision, when they must answer to the Supreme Judge.

And what will ye do?] cf. Hos. ix. 5.

day of visitation] cf.

Hos. ix. 7; Mic. vii. 4; Jer. xi. 23, xxiii. 12, &c.

desolation] or, **storm**; the word is only employed here by Isaiah. The "storm" of invasion "comes from far"; cf. ch. v. 26, xxx. 27.

leave your glory] i.e. "your wealth"; Gen. xxxi. 1; Is. lxi. 6, lxvi. 12.

4. *Without me...slain*] This clause is very difficult. The easiest explanation perhaps is to take it as the answer to the questions of v. 3:

For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.

(they can do nothing) except crouch under the captives and fall under the slain. Another is "Except one (here and there) crouch among captives, they must fall under the slain." Objections to both occur readily enough to anyone who reads the Hebrew, especially the abrupt changes from singular to plural. An ingenious conjecture of Lagarde's gives the sense "Beltis crouches, Osiris is broken (בִּלְתִּי כָרַעַת) ; חַת אֲסִיר ; cf. xlvi. 1 ; Jer. l. 2), they fall, &c." ; i.e. the heathen gods shall be unable to give protection to their votaries. But there is no evidence that *Egyptian* deities (Osiris) were worshipped in Israel in Isaiah's time ; and in any case their sudden introduction here would be surprising.

his hand is stretched out still] See on ch. v. 25 ff.

CHAP. X. 5—34.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD-POWER. AN ORACLE AGAINST ASSYRIA.

This great prophecy is the clearest and probably the earliest exposition of that conception of the divine government of the world which was the guiding principle of the latest period of Isaiah's ministry. The leading idea of the passage is the contrast between the mission assigned to Assyria in the scheme of Jehovah's Providence, and the ambitious policy of universal dominion cherished by the rulers of that Empire. Assyria was the instrument chosen by Jehovah to manifest His sole deity by the extinction of all the nationalities that put their trust in false gods. But the great world-power, intoxicated by its success, and attributing this to its own wisdom and resource, recognises no difference between Jehovah and other gods, but confidently reckons on proving His impotence by the subjugation of His land and people. Hence it becomes necessary for Jehovah to vindicate His supreme Godhead by the destruction of the power which has thus impiously transgressed the limits of its providential commission. And this judgment will take place at the very moment when Assyria seeks to crown its career of conquest by an assault on Jehovah's sanctuary on Mount Zion, the earthly seat of His government. These are the ideas which lay at the root of Isaiah's heroic faith in the crisis of Sennacherib's invasion. He did not doubt that Judah's sins required an exemplary chastisement, or that that chastisement would come by means of the Assyrians, but he had the firmest conviction that Jehovah's purpose did not include the violation of His sanctuary, which would in that age have been equivalent to the extinction of the true religion.

When was this prophecy written ? Certainly between the years 717 and 701. The superior limit is given by the list of captured cities in v. 9. Carchemish, the latest conquest there mentioned, was incorpo-

rated in the Assyrian Empire (although, to be sure, it had been captured more than once previously) in 717, about five years after the fall of Samaria. The lower limit is of course the great invasion of 701. But whether the oracle was uttered near the beginning, middle, or end of that period is a question on which no agreement has yet been reached.

(1) The opinion that the prophecy belongs to a time not long after the destruction of Samaria has much to recommend it. The overthrow of the greater portion of Jehovah's people must have excited the greatest consternation in Judah, and led to anxious questionings as to where this seemingly irresistible tide of invasion was to end. This would be a suitable occasion for the publication of a prophetic oracle on the true function of Assyria in Jehovah's counsel and the impassable limit to its power. It is also in favour of an early date that *v.* 20 seems to contain a reflection on the fatal policy inaugurated by Ahaz of trusting to Assyria as the best security against national annihilation. The principal objection to this view arises from the impression, which is probably a just one, that the prophet regards the crisis, and consequently the defeat of Assyria, as *imminent* (see esp. *vv.* 28—34).

(2) Assuming that an invasion of Judah was either actually carried out or at least seriously contemplated by Sargon about 711, several critics have brought this prophecy into connexion with that event. The same difficulty, however, meets us here in another form. The prophecy of chapter xx., which undoubtedly belongs to the time supposed, anticipates a still further extension of the Assyrian conquests to Egypt and Ethiopia. It seems incredible that when Isaiah had for three years sought to impress that fact on his countrymen, he should simultaneously announce the downfall of Assyria as an event just about to take place.

(3) There remains the hypothesis that this oracle belongs generally to the same period as the group of discourses with which it has the closest affinities (*chs.* xxviii.—xxxii.), and was uttered in view of Sennacherib's invasion in 701. Only, the imaginary description of the invader's route in *vv.* 28—32 forbids us to place it too near the actual attack. The Assyrians are there conceived as advancing *from the north*, which was the natural course for an Assyrian onslaught on Jerusalem to take. Sennacherib's expedition, however, came from the Philistine plain, and for some time previous to the event, it must have been evident that that was the direction from which danger was to be apprehended. Other objections to this date have little weight. It is true that none of the conquests enumerated in *v.* 9 were effected by Sennacherib in person, but neither were they all effected by any one king, and if it is the king who speaks in *v.* 9 he speaks not in his own name but as the representative of the might of Asshur. Nor is *v.* 27 inconsistent with the fact that Hezekiah had renounced his allegiance to Assyria before the attack by Sennacherib. The mere withholding of tribute was by no means equivalent to emancipation from the Assyrian yoke, so long as Assyria was in a position to enforce submission by an exemplary chastisement.

These arguments are only valid on the assumption of the Isaianic authorship and substantial unity of the passage as a whole. The grounds on which this has been disputed by recent writers (see Cheyne,

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger,
And the staff in their hand *is* mine indignation.
I will send him against a hypocritical nation,

5

6

Introduction, pp. xlviii ff.) are not convincing, and cannot be adequately discussed here.

Following Ewald, we may divide the prophecy into three main sections:—

i. vv. 5—15. The plan of Jehovah and the plan of Asshur.

(1) The divine mission entrusted to Assyria is boldly contrasted with the barbarous lust of plunder and conquest, and the glorification of brute force which characterised the policy of that Empire (5—7).

(2) The latter thought is expanded in a speech put into the mouth of the Assyrian, in which he enumerates his past successes, and confidently anticipates an easy conquest of Jerusalem (8—11). The prophet's answer (12).

(3) A second speech of the Assyrian, full of the spirit of self-exaltation and savage delight in the exercise of irresistible power (13, 14); the section closing with a contemptuous reply on the part of the prophet, recalling the image of the opening verse (15).

ii. vv. 16—23. The overthrow of Assyria and its consequences for Judah.

(1) The destruction of Assyria is described under the two figures of a wasting disease and a consuming fire (16—19).

(2) The conversion of the Remnant of Israel will follow this decisive manifestation of Jehovah's sovereignty (20—23).

iii. vv. 24—34. The peroration, consisting of:

(1) A message of comfort to the harassed nation (24—27).

(2) An ideal description of the march of the Assyrian from the northern frontier to the walls of Jerusalem (28—32) and his sudden annihilation by the hand of Jehovah (33, 34).

5—7. Jehovah's plan contrasted with Assyria's purpose.

5. *O Assyrian*] **Ho Asshur**, the name both of the people and its national god. The god being little more than the personified genius of the nation, we might almost venture to suppose that he is here directly addressed and is the speaker in vv. 8 ff. But the word is never used of the god in the O.T.

the rod of mine anger] the instrument with which Jehovah chastises the nations, cf. Jer. li. 20.

and the staff...indignation] lit. "and a staff, it is in their hand, my indignation,"—an absolutely refractory clause. Driver (*Tenses* § 201, 1, Obs.) translates "and a staff is it in their hand, [viz.] mine indignation." But to say in one line that Assyria is the rod of Jehovah's anger and in the next that His indignation is a staff in *their* hand is awkward in the extreme. Better a "flat tautology" than that, although the objection is meaningless as applied to a synonymous parallelism. It is best to omit the words "it is in their hand" as a gloss and render **and the staff of mine indignation**.

6. *I will send him, &c.*] Rather: I send him against a profane

- And against the people of my wrath will I give him
 a charge,
 To take the spoil, and to take the prey,
 And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.
 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so,
 Neither doth his heart think so;
 But *it is* in his heart to destroy
 And cut off nations not a few.
 8 For he saith, *Are* not my princes altogether kings?
 9 *Is* not Calno as Carchemish?
Is not Hamath as Arpad?
Is not Samaria as Damascus?
 10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols,

nation (R.V.). See ch. ix. 17. In a general description of the mission of Assyria it is not advisable to limit the reference to Judah or Israel. The meaning is that Jehovah sends the Assyrian against any nation that deserves punishment.

people of my wrath] See ix. 19.

like the mire of the streets] Cf. Ps. xviii. 42; Mic. vii. 10.

7. *Howbeit he meaneth not so*] The charge is not so much that Asshur exceeds his commission (as in Zech. i. 15), as that he recognises no commission at all; his policy is entirely oblivious of moral interests.

8—11. The first speech of the Assyrian.

8. *Are not my officers altogether kings?*] Many of them really were subjugated kings (2 Ki. xxv. 28), and any one of them excelled in dignity the petty sovereigns of the independent states (see ch. xxxvi. 9). The title "King of Kings" (Ez. xxvi. 7) was already assumed by Assyrian monarchs.

9. The six cities are enumerated in geographical order from north to south, the first of each pair being, however, nearer to Jerusalem than the second. (1) The site of Carchemish (Ass. *Gargamîsh*) was identified by Mr G. Smith with the ruins of *Ferabîs* on the right bank of the Euphrates. As a great centre of the Hittite confederacy it had been frequently subdued by Assyrian kings, and was ultimately incorporated in the Empire by Sargon in 717. (2) Calno is probably *Kullani*, a city near Arpad, captured by Tiglath-pileser III. about 738. It is probably identical with the Calneh mentioned in Am. vi. 2; but quite distinct from the Babylonian Calneh of Gen. x. 10. (3) Arpad (now *Tell Erfâd*, about 15 miles north of Aleppo) was taken about 740 by Tiglath-pileser. (4) Hamath (*Hamah*, on the Orontes, about half way between Carchemish and Damascus) was taken by Tiglath-pileser in 738 and again by Sargon in 720. (5) Damascus fell about 732 and (6) Samaria in 722.

10. *the kingdoms of the idols*] The expression "nonentities" (see on ch. ii. 8) is surprising in the mouth of the Assyrian; but not inappropriate, since even from his point of view the overthrow of so many

And whose graven images did excel *them* of Jerusalem
and of Samaria;
Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her ¹¹
idols,
So do to Jerusalem and her idols?
Wherefore it shall come to pass, *that* when the Lord ¹²
hath performed his whole work
Upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem,
I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king
of Assyria,
And the glory of his high looks.
For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have ¹³
done *it*,
And by my wisdom; for I am prudent:
And I have removed the bounds of the people,

kingdoms might seem a demonstration of the non-entity of their gods as compared with the solitary might of Asshur.

and whose graven images, &c.] A circumstantial clause: **although their images, &c.**

did excel] “were more than,” either in number or importance. The Assyrian is after all an idolater at heart, measuring the prestige of a god by the multitude and excellence of his graven images.

11. But Samaria has fallen, her idols have not saved her; how then can Jerusalem escape, who trusts in the same deity? *Samaria and her idols (nonentities)... Jerusalem and her idols (images).*

12. The verse seems to interrupt what might well have been a single speech of the Assyrian King, by a threat of the doom reserved for him. The arrogant assumption that Jehovah is a mere tribal deity, who is defeated when His images are overthrown, rouses the prophet to this indignant outburst.

when the Lord hath performed] **completed**, lit. “cut off.” The figure is taken from the cutting off of the finished web from the loom. See ch. xxxviii. 12; also Zech. iv. 9.

his whole work] The work of chastisement and purification, to be executed on mount Zion and on Jerusalem.

the fruit of the stout heart (lit. “fruit of the pride of heart,” see ch. ix. 9) *of the king of Assyria*] The “fruit” is the outcome of his pride in such language as vv. 8—11, 13 f.

13, 14. The second imaginary speech of the king of Assyria. He ascribes his successes (and how easy have they been! v. 14) solely to his own power and wisdom. Comp. the self-glorification of the prince of Tyre in Ezek. xxviii.

13. *I am prudent*] Better, **I have insight**.

I have removed the bounds of the people] (**peoples** as R.V.). It was the policy of the later Assyrian Empire to obliterate national distinctions,

- And have robbed their treasures,
 And I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant *man*:
 14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the
 people:
 And as *one* gathereth eggs *that are* left,
 Have I gathered all the earth;
 And there was none that moved the wing,
 Or opened the mouth, or peeped.
- 15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth
 therewith?
Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that
 shaketh it?
 As if the rod should shake *itself against* them that lift
 it up,
Or as if the staff should lift up *itself, as if it were* no
 wood.

partly by welding the separate states under a single administration and partly by wholesale deportation of conquered populations. In the view of antiquity this was a violation of the divinely constituted order of the world (see Deut. xxxii. 8). Even in the Messianic age, Isaiah anticipates that the political integrity of different nationalities will be preserved (ch. ii. 2—4).

their treasures] lit. *parata*, "things prepared."

put down the inhabitants] R.V. has **brought down...them that sit (on thrones)**. Vulg. "in sublimi residentes." That translation is suggested by the verb "bring down," which seems to imply that those referred to were previously exalted. The text is possibly defective. LXX. reads *σελω πόλεις κατοικουμένας*.

like a valiant man] The Qērê (*kabbîr*, a word found only in Isaiah and Job) means "a great one" (Job xxxiv. 17 [R.V.], 24, xxxvi. 5, of God). It is difficult to see why in this case the consonantal text was departed from. It has *kē'abbîr*, either "like a strong one" (*Kaph veritatis*), or "like a bull." See on ch. i. 24. The bull as a symbol of strength figures largely in Assyrian art.

14. The magnificent simile represents the ease with which the Assyrians had rifled the countries of their treasures, and the panic terror which their approach everywhere produced.

or peeped] R.V. **chirped**; the same word as in viii. 19.

15. To a believer in the divine government of the world the self-exaltation of Assyria is as ludicrous as if a tool were to vaunt itself against the man who uses it. The two last clauses are exclamations.

against them that lift it up] A plural of majesty, indicating that Jehovah is meant. Some Hebrew MSS., however, have the singular.

should lift up itself, as if it were no wood] Lit. **should lift up not-**

Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, 16
 Send among his fat ones leanness;
 And under his glory he shall kindle a burning
 Like the burning of a fire.
 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, 17
 And his Holy One for a flame:
 And it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers
 in one day;
 And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his 18
 fruitful field,
 Both soul and body:
 And they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth.
 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, 19
 That a child may write them.

And it shall come to pass in that day, 20
That the remnant of Israel,
 And such as are escaped of the house of Jacob,

wood. (See R.V.) "Not-wood" is a compound noun like "not-man" in ch. xxxi. 8; "one who is not wood" i.e. a man.

16—19. The destruction of the Assyrian army is described under the two figures of sickness and a conflagration. There is a certain amount of confusion in the metaphors, and undoubtedly the style deteriorates at this point.

16. *the Lord, the Lord of hosts*] as in ch. i. 24. The ordinary printed editions have the unparalleled expression *Adônāi Tsēbāôth*, for which Baer rightly restores *Yahveh Tsēbāôth*.

send among his fat ones] Better, "send into his fat limbs," the image being that of a human body. For the metaphor see ch. xvii. 4.

he shall kindle...fire] Better, **there shall burn a burning like the burning of fire.** The monotony is as marked in the Hebrew as in this translation.

17. The same figure as in ch. ix. 18.

18. *both soul and body*] For similarly abrupt changes of metaphor, cf. ch. v. 24, viii. 8, xxviii. 18.

and they shall be...fainteth] Render with R.V. marg., **and it shall be as when a sick man pineth away**, a return to the figure with which v. 16 opens. The participle *nôšēs* occurs nowhere else: A.V. connects it with *nēs* a standard; the translation "sick man" rests on the analogy of the Syriac.

19. *And the rest*] **the remnant** (R.V.); the same word as in vv. 20, 21, 22. *shall be few*] lit. "a number," a numerable quantity.

a child may write them] i.e. make a list of them.

20—23. The conversion of the survivors of Israel.

20. *such as are escaped*] cf. ch. iv. 2.

Shall no more again stay upon him that smote them;
But shall stay upon the LORD,
The Holy One of Israel, in truth.

21 The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob,
Unto the mighty God.

22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of
the sea,

Yet a remnant of them shall return:

The consumption decreed shall overflow *with*
righteousness.

23 For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a con-
sumption, even determined,

In the midst of all *the land*.

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts,

shall no more again stay (themselves) *upon him that smote them*] an allusion to the Assyrian alliance contracted by Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 7 ff.), a policy, however, whose evil consequences were not fully realised till the reign of Hezekiah. From the false situation in which the nation was then placed no escape was possible except by the intervention of Jehovah. After that deliverance the survivors shall adopt the attitude, consistently advocated by Isaiah, of steadfast reliance on Jehovah alone; they *shall stay* (themselves) *upon Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth* (in faithfulness).

21. *The remnant, &c.*] **A remnant shall turn.** Thus shall be fulfilled the prophecy embodied in the name of Isaiah's son, *Shear-jashub* (ch. vii. 3).

the mighty God] **the Hero-God**—in ch. ix. 6 a title of the Messiah, but here apparently of Jehovah.

22. "For though thy population, O Israel, should be as the sand of the sea, (only) a remnant in it shall turn (and be saved)." (Cf. Hos. i. 10; Gen. xxii. 17.)

the consumption decreed...righteousness] Render: **extermination is decreed overflowing in righteousness.** The "extermination" is the judgment which reduces the teeming population of Israel to a mere remnant; this will be an overwhelming manifestation of Jehovah's judicial righteousness (see on ch. i. 27). It seems impossible to take this clause in a consolatory sense, as if the verb "decreed" expressed the limitation fixed for the judgment. The very similar phraseology of the next verse, compared with ch. xxviii. 22, shews that the threatening aspect of the decree is prominent.

23. The verse reads: **For an extermination and a decisive work is the Lord Jehovah of Hosts about to execute in the midst of the whole earth** (or land): cf. ch. xxviii. 22. The phrase "extermination and decisive work" is repeated in Dan. ix. 27 (cf. xi. 36). The word for "decisive" is from the verb rendered "decreed" in last verse.

O my people that dwellest in Zion,
 Be not afraid of the Assyrian :
 He shall smite thee with a rod,
 And shall lift up his staff against thee, after the
 manner of Egypt.
 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall ²⁵
 cease,
 And mine anger in their destruction.
 And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for ²⁶
 him
 According to the slaughter of Midian at the rock Oreb :
 And *as* his rod *was* upon the sea,
 So shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.
 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That his burden shall be taken away from off thy ²⁷
 shoulder,
 And his yoke from off thy neck,

24—27. In view of this ultimate prospect, the prophet turns with a message of consolation to the believing kernel of the nation.

24. *O my people that dwellest in Zion*] Cf. ch. xiv. 32, xxx. 19. Dwelling in Zion is the emblem of security, since it is there that Jehovah will beat back and destroy the Assyrian (*vv.* 32—34).

he shall smite thee...and shall lift up...] These are relative clauses attached to "the Assyrian." Render: **who smites thee...and lifts up his staff**, &c. (cf. ix. 4).

after the manner of Egypt] As the Egyptians did in the time of the Oppression, Exod. v. (cf. for the expressions Am. iv. 10).

25. *For yet a very little while*] Cf. ch. xxix. 17, (xvi. 14).
and mine anger in their destruction] A more grammatical rendering would be: **and mine anger (is directed) to their (the Assyrians') annihilation**. The two clauses of the verse appear to be antithetical; indignation (against Israel) comes to an end, wrath (against Assyria) culminates in its utter destruction.

26. *For stir up for him* render **brandish over him**, a sense authenticated by 2 Sam. xxiii. 18.

according to the slaughter...Oreb] Transl. **like the smiting of Midian at the rock Oreb**. For the incident referred to, see Jud. vii. 25 (cf. Ps. lxxxiii. 9, 11; Is. ix. 4).

and as his rod...Egypt] To be paraphrased thus: "and his rod (which was stretched out) over the (Red) Sea (at the Exodus from Egypt), he shall lift up as it was lifted up to destroy the Egyptians." The last phrase is used in effective antithesis to the use in v. 24.

27. The figures of the burden and the yoke are combined exactly as in ch. xiv. 25.

And the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

and the yoke...anointing] A very difficult sentence. The closest rendering is that of the margin of R.V.: **and the yoke shall be destroyed by reason of fatness**. This has usually been interpreted to mean that the animal (Judah) will "wax fat and kick" (Deut. xxxii. 15) and break its yoke; or that its increasing fatness will burst the yoke on its neck (a very odd comparison!). Neither of these senses is at all tolerable; according to Isaiah's teaching the prosperity of the nation only commences after Jehovah has destroyed the Assyrian yoke. Dillmann's interpretation—Judah will become so vigorous after its emancipation that no one will ever think of putting it under the yoke again—is equally unsatisfying. The text is almost certainly corrupt, and of the various emendations that have been proposed the most plausible are those which find in the clause a mutilated introduction to *vv.* 28—32. Prof. Robertson Smith has suggested instead of the last four words: **יְהוָה: עֲלֵה מִצְפּוֹן שָׂדֶה**. The twenty-seventh verse would end with the first word ("the yoke *shall cease* from off thy neck"), and the next would begin thus: "A destroyer comes up from the north; he comes to Aiath, &c." The alterations are considerable, but undoubtedly we thus obtain a suitable commencement to the sketch of the Assyrian advance. Duhm follows on the same lines, but reads, "he comes up from Pene-Rimmon" (i.e. the Rock Rimmon, a few miles north of Aiath, Jud. xx. 45). This however plunges us *in medias res* as abruptly as before.

28—32. A free delineation (mostly in prophetic perfects) of the march of an Assyrian army towards Jerusalem. The verses are not to be taken as a prediction that the enemy will actually come by this route, still less of course are they an *oraculum post eventum*. They simply present a graphic picture of the unrelenting energy and eagerness of an Assyrian army, and the ease with which it might invade Judah from the north now that Samaria has fallen. And this is done in order to introduce the assurance that when the invader does come, and the prize is just within his grasp, Jehovah will smite him down (*vv.* 33 ff.). A passage of very similar character is Mic. i. 10—16.

The strategic point in the itinerary here sketched is the Pass of Michmash, the scene of Jonathan's famous exploit against the Philistines (1 Sam. xiv.), and at this time probably marking the northern frontier of the kingdom of Judah. It is situated in the modern Wadi Suweint, and is guarded by the villages of Michmash on the north and Geba on the south. The road from Michmash crosses the valley in a south-westerly direction, and about midway between Michmash and Geba (the whole distance is about two miles) traverses an extremely narrow defile, where a large army might easily be checked by a handful of resolute defenders. In *vv.* 28 f. Isaiah alludes to the precautions that would naturally be taken to secure a safe passage of this difficult ravine.

He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; 28
 At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages:
 They are gone over the passage: they have taken up 29
 their lodging at Geba;
 Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled.
 Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: 30
 Cause *it* to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth.
 Madmenah is removed; 31
 The inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee.
 As yet shall *he* remain at Nob *that* day: 32
 He shall shake his hand *against* the mount of the
 daughter of Zion,
 The hill of Jerusalem.

28. He comes upon Alath] *Ayyath* (cf. 1 Chr. vii. 28 [R.V. marg.]; Neh. xi. 31) is no doubt the ancient *Ai*, and was probably two miles N.W. from Michmash.

Migron] The only known place of this name lay on the south side of the pass (1 Sam. xiv. 2). Prof. Robertson Smith thinks the operation indicated is the seizing of this post on the southern side by a *coup de main* before attempting to lead the main army through the defile. Most other commentators, however, hold that some place, not to be certainly identified, between Ai and Michmash is intended.

laid up his carriages] R.V. *layeth up his baggage*, deposits his *impedimenta*. "Carriages" in old English means of course not that in which one is carried, but that which one carries (cf. Acts xxi. 15).

29. They go through the pass; they make Geba their encampment for the night. The latter clause might also be translated as the eager cry of the Assyrians: "Geba is our night quarters." From this point the road to Jerusalem lies open; hence the remaining verses simply describe the terror spread amongst the villages along the route of the Assyrians. *Ramah* (*Er-Râm*) is less than two miles due west of Geba, *Gibeah of Saul* is probably *Tulêl el-Fâl*, about halfway between that place and Jerusalem.

30. Shriek loudly, O daughter of Gallim; listen, O Laishah. Neither of these places can be identified.

O poor Anathoth] Translate, with a slight change of pointing, *answer her, O Anathoth*. Anathoth (*Anâta*) is about three miles N.N.E. from Jerusalem.

31. *Madmenah* (Dung-hill) and *Gebim* (Cisterns) are both unknown. For *gather themselves to flee* render: *hastily secure (their belongings)*, Ex. ix. 19.

32. Render with Cheyne: *This very day he will halt in Nob, swinging his hand, &c.* Nob (1 Sam. xxi. xxii.; Neh. xi. 32) must be sought in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, but its site has not yet been ascertained. The most probable conjecture is that it was on the height of Scopus overlooking the city from the north.

- 33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
 Shall lop the bough with terror:
 And the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down,
 And the haughty shall be humbled.
- 34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with
 iron,
 And Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

33, 34. Just when the Assyrian is in sight of his goal, Jehovah smites him down. The description naturally passes into figurative and somewhat vague language. The image is that of a stately forest laid low by the axe-man.

33. **The Lord Jehovah of Hosts**, as in *v.* 16.

The "high ones of stature," and the "lofty ones" (R.V.) are the great trees; the epithets keep within the limits of the figure. For *be humbled* read *lie low*.

34. *the thickets of the forest* (R.V.) cf. *ch.* ix. 18. The verb in the first clause is probably passive: "shall be cut down." *Lebanon*] Better, **the Lebanon**. Lebanon means "the white (mountain)"—either from its snows or its chalk cliffs—and in Hebr. prose always retains the art.; here, however, the reference is to its forests, which supply a figure for the Assyrian army.

a mighty one] or "a majestic One"—Jehovah Himself.

CHAP. XI.

The overthrow of the world-power is followed by the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom. In this chapter, however, we have two Messianic pictures so distinct in character that it is necessary to consider them separately.

(i) *vv.* 1—9 contain a prophecy of the advent of the Messiah (*v.* 1), a description of his character (2) and government (3—5) and a picture of the marvellous transformation of animated nature which is the reflection of his just and beneficent reign (6—9). The passage stands along with *ch.* ix. 1—7 and xxxii. 1 ff. as one of the three great presentations of the conception of a personal Messiah which the book of Isaiah contains. Until quite recently the Isaianic authorship of all three passages was accepted without hesitation by critics of all shades of opinion. Hackmann and Cheyne now dissent from this view, and relegate the whole conception of a personal Messiah to a period subsequent to the Exile. But their objections are hardly of sufficient weight to justify so revolutionary a conclusion. The linguistic arguments are admitted by Cheyne to be indecisive. And while it is true that the contents of the prophecy do not point unambiguously to the age of Isaiah, this is not to be wondered at in a delineation of the ideal future. On the other hand the passage contains no assumptions inconsistent with Isaiah's authorship. For the decay of the Davidic dynasty, which appears to be implied in the figure of *v.* 1, is not a presupposition in the

sense that the prophecy could not have been written until it was an accomplished fact. It is assumed only that the reigning dynasty will have disappeared before the manifestation of the Messiah; and this expectation is in harmony with Isaiah's whole conception of the progress of events. It is no more than is involved in the sentence of rejection on Ahaz (ch. vii. 13 ff.), or perhaps in the anticipation of an overwhelming national calamity, which the prophet maintained to the end of his ministry. In any case the Messianic age is a new creation, and if there was to be an ideal Son of David at all, he must be conceived as a new shoot from the ancient stock of Jesse.

(ii) vv. 10—16, on the other hand, describe mainly the *formation* of the new Messianic community by the home-gathering of Israelites from all parts of the world. The arguments against the genuineness of this passage are more cogent than in the case of (i), and are endorsed by a wider circle of critics. Here a definite historical situation is assumed which can only with some violence be harmonised with the actual circumstances of Isaiah's time. Jews are in exile not only in Assyria, but in Egypt, Ethiopia, the Mediterranean lands, &c. Further, these Exiles are described as a "Remnant," a term which seems to imply that some have been already restored, and which at all events is never used by Isaiah of those who have gone into captivity, but of those who survive the judgment in the land of Israel. It is no doubt possible, as Delitzsch and Bredenkamp believe, that Isaiah might have been transported into the future, and dealt with a state of things which was not to arise till long afterwards. But it is more in accordance with the analogy of prophecy to suppose that the outlook was conceived in the circumstances which it presupposes, especially since the undoubted writings of Isaiah never mention a return from Exile, or a restoration of the Northern Tribes, or a subjugation of the neighbouring states by warlike conquest. These facts, and some others which will be referred to in the Notes, although not conclusive, justify a certain measure of hesitation in assigning the prophecy to Isaiah; and this uncertainty should be borne in mind in putting together the various elements which entered into his vision of the future of God's kingdom.

CH. XI. 1—9. THE MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM.

It is interesting to compare this passage with ch. ix. 1—7. There the delineation of the Messianic age starts from its broadest and most general features—the light breaking on the land, the universally diffused joy of the redeemed nation—and only at the end centres itself in the person of the Wonderful Child who is born to ascend the throne. Here the person of the Messiah comes first, and then the healing and regenerating influences of which he is the channel. To what period of Isaiah's career the prophecy belongs cannot be determined. The affinity with ch. ix. 1—7 suggests the reign of Ahaz, to which it is assigned by Guthe in accordance with a particular theory of the development of Isaiah's eschatology. But since there is no evidence that the idea of the Messianic King ever lost its significance to the prophet's mind, it might with equal propriety be referred to any subsequent period of his ministry.

- 11 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of
 Jesse,
 And a Branch shall grow out of his roots:
 2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
 The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 The spirit of counsel and might,
 The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

Duhm places this and the companion oracles of ii. 2—4, xxxii. 1—5 in the evening of Isaiah's long life. In its present setting the passage is no doubt intended as a sequel to ch. x. 5—34 and it might even belong to the same date.

1. The advent of the Messiah. Idea and figure correspond to those of ch. vi. 13; as a new Israel will spring up from the "stump" of the old, so the Messianic King will arise from the decayed family of David. Some commentators find in the image an intentional contrast to that of ch. x. 34; while the forest of Assyria is cut down never to spring up again, the stock of Judah's royal dynasty will sprout and flourish. The precise relation of the Messiah to the reigning branch of the family is purposely left indefinite (cf. Mic. v. 2).

a rod] Better as R.V. **a shoot**. The word rendered "*stem*" occurs only twice again. Here it bears the same meaning as in Job xiv. 8; it is the **stock** which remains in the earth after the tree is cut down. In Is. xl. 24 it means a "slip" planted in the ground in order to strike root. The figure, therefore, like "roots" in the next line, seems to imply the downfall of the dynasty.

a Branch shall grow out of his roots] Render as R.V. **a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit**—shall come to maturity. Jesse is mentioned instead of David probably because of the intentional vagueness in which the Messiah's origin is left.

2. His supernatural endowment through the spirit of Jehovah with the qualities of a perfect ruler. The "charismata" are grouped in three pairs; when we add the separate mention of the spirit of Jehovah at the head of the list we may perhaps find here the first suggestion of the "seven spirits" of God (Rev. i. 4). In reality, however, the three pairs unfold the different aspects of the "Spirit of Jehovah." The first pair of virtues are intellectual, the second practical, and the third religious.

wisdom and understanding (or "discernment") are the fundamental intellectual qualifications of a judge or ruler. Deut. i. 13; 1 Ki. iii. 12.

counsel and might] "Counsel" is the faculty of adapting means to ends or of forming right resolutions; "might" the energy necessary to carry them through.

of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD] **of the knowledge and fear of Jehovah**. It seems necessary here to take "knowledge" as equivalent to "knowledge of Jehovah," in spite of the rule that "not more than one construct can stand before the same genitive" (Davidson, *Syntax*, § 27. b). "Knowledge of Jehovah" is insight into His cha-

And shall make him of quick understanding in the ³
fear of the LORD:

And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes,
Neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

• But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, ⁴
And reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:
And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his
mouth,

racter and His moral claims on men, "fear of Jehovah" is the common O.T. expression for piety; both together make up the O.T. idea of religion.

• 3—5. Thus equipped with all the personal qualities needful for his high office, the ideal King will exercise a perfectly just and equitable government over his subjects. The Hebrew conception of kingship includes two functions, leadership in war and the administration of justice in time of peace (1 Sam. viii. 20). Here, for an obvious reason (ch. ix. 5), only the civil aspect of the office is dwelt upon.

• 3. *and shall make him...LORD*] The best translation is that of R. V. **and his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah**, lit. "his scent shall be in, &c." The Messiah shall not only possess true religion himself, but shall be quick to recognise its presence in others and shall take delight in it wherever he finds it. The sense is perhaps appropriate, but the expression is very peculiar, and hence some critics consider that the clause is a corrupt repetition of the preceding words. (See Cheyne's *Commentary*, crit. note.)

• *he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, &c.*] i.e. in virtue of the spirit with which he is endowed, he shall not be dependent on the evidence of his senses, but shall immediately and infallibly discern the moral condition of men's hearts (cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 20). The second member of the parallelism shews that more than mere impartiality in judgment is intended. For *reprove* render **decide**, as R. V. marg.

• 4. The special objects of his care are the defenceless and down-trodden classes (cf. ch. i. 23, x. 2). Observe that the sporadic outbreak of injustice and violence does not appear to be excluded from Isaiah's conception of the Messianic age; only, the transgressors are at once discovered and destroyed.

• *the meek of the earth*] Possibly "the oppressed in the land." Two words ('*ānī* and '*ānāv*') are often confounded in the Hebr. Text; the former means simply to be in abject circumstances, the latter includes the religious virtue of resignation to an adverse lot (Rahlf's, '*Ani und Anaw in den Psalmen*').

• *he shall smite the earth*] The word for "earth" ('*ereṣ*') is probably written wrongly for '*ārīṣ*' "oppressor." It is not permissible, with Del. &c., to explain "earth" in the N.T. sense of "the (ungodly) world," or "Wicked," in the next clause, of the Antichrist (cf. 2 Thess. ii. 8).

with the rod of his mouth...with the breath of his lips] Cf. Rev. i. 6. The Messiah's sentence has a self-fulfilling energy (cf. Hos. vi. 5;

And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

- 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his reins.
6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling
together;
And a little child shall lead them.
7 And the cow and the bear shall feed;
Their young ones shall lie down together:
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the
asp,

Acts v. 1—10). This reveals the operation of the “spirit of might,” as v. 3 represents the effect of the “spirit of wisdom.”

5. “Righteousness” and “faithfulness” are the strength of the Messiah’s government (ch. ix. 7). The girdle is the symbol of resolute and vigorous action. Comp. the “girdle of truth” in Eph. vi. 14.

6—8. This remarkable prophecy of the idyllic state of the brute creation is imitated in the Sibylline Oracles (iii. 766 ff.) and more faintly echoed in the Fourth and Fifth Eclogues of Vergil. Similarly, an Arabic poet (*Ibn Onein*, quoted by Ges.) speaks of “a righteousness, through which the hungry wolf becomes tame.”—The description is not to be interpreted allegorically, as if the wild beasts were merely symbols for cruel and rapacious men. Neither perhaps is it to be taken quite literally. It is rather a poetic presentation of the truth that the regeneration of human society is to be accompanied by a restoration of the harmony of creation (cf. Rom. viii. 19—22). The fact that tame and wild animals are regularly bracketed together shews that the main idea is the establishment of peace between man and the animals (Hos. ii. 20); the animals that are now wild shall no longer prey on those that are domesticated for the service of man. But the striking feature of the prophecy is that the predatory beasts are not conceived as extirpated (as Ezek. xxxiv. 25, 28) but as having their habits and instincts changed.

7. Cf. lxxv. 25. *shall feed*] Better, **shall graze**, unless we are to supply “alike” as in lxxv. 25. Some critics prefer to read “shall associate together,” with a small alteration of the text.

8. The most startling contrast of all,—the innocent babe playing with the deadly serpent.

asp] Heb. *pethen*, rendered “adder” in Ps. lxxviii. 4, xci. 13, elsewhere as here. The species has not been identified. The *cockatrice* (*ṣiph’ônî*, rendered “adder” in Prov. xxxiii. 32) is usually identified with the basilisk (or King-serpent) of North Africa, but that reptile is not found in Palestine.

And the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain:

For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD,

As the waters cover the sea.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, 10

Which shall stand for an ensign of the people;

To it shall the Gentiles seek:

And his rest shall be glorious.

The word *den* (only here) is doubtful. The most natural view is that it is fem. of the word for "luminary" and denotes the glittering eye of the serpent, which attracts the child like a jewel.

The verb rendered *put* means strictly "lead"; comp. *ducere manum*.

9. It is questionable if the subject here is still the wild beasts (as in lxv. 25). The second half of the verse is rather against this, and it is better to translate the first half: **none shall do evil or act corruptly in all, &c.**

my holy mountain] Most naturally "Zion," but some commentators understand it of the whole hill-country of Palestine.

for the earth shall be full...sea] Cf. Hab. ii. 14. On the peculiar participial construction, see Driver, *Tenses* § 135. (7) Obs.

CH. XI. (10) 11—16. A PROPHECY OF THE RETURN FROM EXILE.

10. This verse occupies a position somewhat detached from those that follow, as is shewn by the repetition of the introductory formula in v. 11. The thought also is distinct and complete. It is a prophecy of the attractive influence of the true religion over the nations of the world; and resembles ch. ii. 2—4, although here the personal Messiah is the central figure. Comp. John xii. 32.

The construction of the sentence involves a *casus pendens* (Driver, *Tenses*, pp. 264 ff.). Render thus: **and it shall come to pass in that day, the root of Jesse who shall stand as a signal to the peoples—to him shall, &c.**

a root of Jesse] i.e. the "branch from the roots," of v. 1. The expression seems to have become a technical title of the Messiah (cf. ch. liii. 2; Eccus. xlvii. 22; Rev. v. 5, xxii. 16). The variation of the figure from v. 1 rather tells against the Isaianic authorship of this passage.

an ensign] as rallying-point, see on ch. v. 26.

to it shall the Gentiles seek] Rather, **of him shall nations enquire**—a phrase used of the consulting of an oracle (ch. viii. 19, xix. 3). The Messiah is to be the great religious Teacher and Authority of the world.

his rest shall be glorious] **his resting-place** (Gen. xlix. 15,—here alone used of a royal residence) **shall be glory**, cf. ch. iv. 5.

- 11 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the Lord shall set his hand again the second time
 To recover the remnant of his people,
 Which shall be *left* from Assyria,
 And from Egypt, and from Pathros,
 And from Cush, and from *Elam*, and from Shinar,
 And from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.
- 12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations,
 And shall assemble the outcasts of Israel,
 And gather together the dispersed of Judah

11, 12. The gathering of the "dispersed of Israel." It is of course impossible to disprove that in Isaiah's time scattered Israelites were to be found in all the countries mentioned at the end of v. 11. Some might have been included among the captives whom Sargon settled in Elam, Babylonia and Hamath; fugitives from the Northern Kingdom might have taken refuge in considerable numbers in Egypt at the fall of Samaria; and the slave-trade might have carried small groups of Hebrews to the remoter regions. But the language here seems to imply a Jewish dispersion on a large scale, and the only wholesale deportations that had taken place in Isaiah's time were those of Northern Israelites to the Assyrian Empire (2 Ki. xv. 29, xvii. 6). On the other hand, the references exactly fit the circumstances of the post-exilic period, when large colonies of Jews are known to have been spread over the lands here enumerated.

11. *the Lord shall set his hand again*] Or, **the Lord shall again (lift up) his hand.** The verb has to be supplied from the context.

the second time] If the standpoint (actual or ideal) of the prophecy be post-exilic, the most probable reference would be to the first return from exile under Cyrus. Otherwise, we must understand "the first time" of the exodus from Egypt, which is hardly natural, although the prophecy does abound in allusions to that great deliverance.

the remnant] An Isaianic word, but used in a non-Isaianic sense. See introductory note to this chapter. For *recover* read **purchase**, or "redeem."

Pathros (Upper Egypt, Gen. x. 14) and *Cush* (Ethiopia) are dependencies of Egypt; *Elam* (Susiana), *Shinar* (Babylonia) and *Hamath* (see on ch. x. 9) of Assyria. It should be noticed that the use of the name "Assyria" for the supreme power in Western Asia occurs in post-exilic writings (Ezra vi. 22).

the islands of the sea] The **coast-lands** or countries bordering on the Mediterranean.

12. The meaning of the "signal" here is explained by ch. xlix. 22; it is a signal to the *nations* to release or even to bring back the *exiles*.

the dispersed of Judah] The participle in Hebr. is fem. This may be "a short way of expressing that both sexes will be included"

From the four corners of the earth.

The envy also of Ephraim shall depart,

13

And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off:

Ephraim shall not envy Judah,

And Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines ¹⁴
toward the west;

They shall spoil them of the east together:

They shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab;

And the children of Ammon shall obey them.

And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the ¹⁵
Egyptian sea;

(Cheyne). Giesebrecht, however, explains it by the favourite emblem (with later writers) of a scattered flock (Ez. xxxiv. 4 ff.; Zeph. iii. 19).

the four corners (lit. "edges," Deut. xxii. 12) *of the earth*] The expression occurs only in Ez. vii. 2 (of the land); Job xxxvii. 3, xxxviii. 13 (cf. Is. xxiv. 16).

13, 14. The healing of the breach between the Northern and Southern kingdoms, and their joint conquest of the neighbouring peoples.

13. The parallelism seems to demand that the *adversaries of Judah* be explained as gen. of the subject (those in Judah that are adversaries to Ephraim). This is not very natural, but it is certainly better than to take *envy of Ephraim* as gen. of obj. (envy felt by Judah towards Ephraim).

shall not vex] **shall not oppress**. It is the verb of which "adversaries" is the participle. The ascription of "oppression" to Judah and "envy" to Ephraim is hardly consistent with the relative importance of the two states previous to 722. At the same time there seems to be here a clear allusion to ch. ix. 9—12, 20.

14. *they shall fly*] or **swoop**, as a bird of prey (Hab. i. 8). The country of the Philistines is compared to a *shoulder* falling down towards the sea (cf. Num. xxxiv. 11; Jos. xv. 11, xviii. 12).

them of the east] lit. **the children of the East** (as R.V.), a name for the Arabs of the Eastern desert.

they shall lay...obey them] The Hebrew construction is peculiar. Lit. "Edom and Moab shall be the forth-putting of their hand, and the children of Ammon their obedience."

15, 16. A miraculous passage prepared for the return of the exiles. The allusions to the Exodus are palpable and extend to the next chapter.

15. Cf. Zech. x. 10 f. *shall utterly destroy*] lit. "lay under the ban." But the reading of several ancient versions (*hehërib* for *hehërim*) gives a better sense: *lay upon* (cf. ch. i. 2). *the tongue of the Egyptian sea* is the Gulf of Suez (cf. Jos. xv. 2, 5, xviii. 19).

- And with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand
 over the river,
 And shall smite it in *the* seven streams,
 And make *men* go over dryshod.
 16 And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his
 people,
 Which shall be left from Assyria;
 Like as it was to Israel
 In the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.
- 12 And in that day thou shalt say,

with his mighty wind] Perhaps **with the fierce heat of his breath**. The word rendered "fierce heat" does not occur again in Hebrew, but a similar Arabic word is used of internal heat (either physical or mental). The phrase seems misplaced; it belongs to the figure of the drying up of the sea, not to that of shaking the hand. *over the river*] the Euphrates, as in ch. vii. 20, viii. 7. *smite it in the seven streams*] R.V. **into seven streams**. *dryshod*] lit. "in sandals."

16. *a highway*] through river and desert. This miraculous "highway" is a frequent feature in prophetic descriptions of the return from exile. Cf. ch. xxxv. 8, xl. 3, 4, xlii. 16, xlix. 11, &c.

CHAPTER XII.

forms the lyrical epilogue to the first great division of the book (ch. i. —xii.). It consists of two short hymns of praise (vv. 1, 2 and vv. 3—6) which are put into the mouth of the ransomed people. As Israel sang songs of triumph after the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. xv.), so the restored exiles shall celebrate the great salvation with such psalms of thanksgiving and joy as these. There is thus an obvious link of connexion with xi. 10—16, where the anticipations of the Messianic salvation are throughout largely coloured by reminiscences of the exodus from Egypt. Nevertheless, the secondary and imitative character of the chapter is so apparent as almost to exclude the supposition that it was written by Isaiah. Its literary affinities are with the Song of Moses, with certain parts of the Psalter, and with lyrical passages interspersed in the later prophecy of ch. xxiv.—xxvii. (see the Notes below). With the exception of the expression "Holy One of Israel" in v. 6 it presents none of the phrases distinctive of Isaiah's style; and in no other instance does that prophet close an oracle with a liturgical passage like this. Hence the opinion expressed by Ewald in 1840, that the chapter is a late addition to the book of Isaiah, has slowly won a wide acceptance among scholars.

1, 2. The first song, the singer being the individualised community, as frequently in the Pss.

O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry
with me,

Thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me
Behold, God *is* my salvation;

I will trust, and not be afraid:

For the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my*
song;

He also is become my salvation.

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the
wells of salvation.

And in that day shall ye say,

Praise the LORD, call upon his name,

Declare his doings among the people,

Make mention that his name *is* exalted.

Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: 5

1. The introductory formula (here and in v. 4) resembles those in
xxv. 9, xxvi. 1, xxvii. 2. *thou wast angry*] a word never used
by any prophet, but found in Ps. ii. 12, lx. 1, lxxix. 5, lxxxv. 5.

is turned away] The form is that of the jussive; but it is probably
the contracted form of the consec. impf. which sometimes occurs in
the Pss.

2. *Behold, God is my salvation*] Better: **Behold the God of my
salvation** (Ps. lxxxviii. 1).

The second half of the verse is repeated almost verbally from Ex.
xv. 2. *my song*] the personal suff. is omitted in Hebr., probably
through defective writing.

the LORD JEHOVAH] Hebr. **Yah Yahveh**, a combination only
recurring in ch. xxvi. 4. Since LXX. and other versions have only
one Divine name here it is possible that the second was added in
explanation of the rarer contracted form "Jah."

my salvation] The word here used (*yēshū'āh*) is not found in genuine
prophecies of Isaiah (unless ch. xxxiii. 2, 6 be exceptions).

3. A promise connecting the first song with the second (vv. 4—6).
wells of salvation] (cf. Ps. lxxxvii. 7). The language is figurative,
denoting the inexhaustible fulness of the Divine blessings prepared for
the people of God.

4—6. The members of the redeemed community exhort each other
to publish the praises of Jehovah to the world.

4. The first part exactly as Ps. cv. 1; the last clause resembles
Ps. cxlviii. 13, &c.

call upon his name] lit. "call by (means of) His name," i.e. use His
name (Jehovah) in solemn invocation. See 1 Ki. xviii. 24. That the
expression means merely "utter" or "make known" the name, is hardly
probable. The word for "exalted" occurs in ch. ii. 11, 17.

5. *excellent things*] "Excellence," ch. xxvi. 10; cf. Ex. xv. 1.

This *is* known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion:

For great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

this is known] Better as R.V. **let this be known**.

6. *Cry out*] the same word as in ch. x. 30, but in a very different sense. Cf. ch. xxiv. 14, liv. 1.

inhabitant of Zion] Lit. "inhabitress," Jerusalem being personified as a woman, Mic. i. 11—15; Jer. xlv. 19, &c.

CH. XIII. 1—XIV. 23. THE FALL OF BABYLON.

This is the first of the collection of oracles, dealing mainly with foreign nations, which forms the second great division of the first part of the Book of Isaiah (see General Introd., pp. lxxii f.). It contains two distinct and complete pieces: (1) a prophecy of the impending sack and capture of Babylon by the Medes (xiii. 2—22), and (2) an ode of triumph to be sung by the Jews over the downfall of their oppressor, the king of Babylon (xiv. 4 *b*—21). These are connected by a few verses in a style different from either (xiv. 1—4 *a*); and the ode is followed by a couple of verses which reaffirm the doom pronounced on Babylon in the end of ch. xiii. (xiv. 22 f.). It is not impossible that the amalgamation of the two principal sections may be due to an editor; but the historical situation assumed is the same in both, and reasons for assigning them to separate authors are not to be found.

That neither the passage as a whole nor either of its component parts was written by Isaiah appears from the following considerations. (a) In Isaiah's time Babylon was either a subject province of the Assyrian Empire or engaged in unsuccessful revolt against it. Here she is represented as the supreme world-power, the glory of kingdoms, intoxicated with her own success, and exercising a cruel tyranny over many nations (xiii. 11, 19, xiv. 5 f., 12 ff., 16 f.). (b) In particular she is the power that has long held Israel in the thralldom of exile (xiv. 1—3); an event which might conceivably have been foreseen by Isaiah, but which he could not have assumed as known to the men of his time. But (c) a transference of the world-empire from Assyria to Babylon is really excluded by Isaiah's scheme of history, since he conceives the overthrow of Assyria as followed immediately by the Messianic age. (d) The style and language are not those of Isaiah; and the spirit of fierce and vindictive triumph over the fallen foe, while explicable in a writer of the exile period, would be unnatural in the case of Isaiah. The prophecy, therefore, must have been unintelligible to the contemporaries of Isaiah; and on the principle that the prophet always addresses himself primarily to the circumstances of his own time, we must assign these chapters to the closing years of the Babylonian captivity. A more exact determination of their date is scarcely possible. Even on the question whether they were written before or after the

The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of 13 Amoz did see.

Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain,
Exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand,
That they may go *into* the gates of the nobles.

consolidation of the Median and Persian power by Cyrus in 549, conflicting inferences are drawn from xiii. 17 (see on the verse below). It may be added that by such a view the passage is not robbed of its predictive character. It was certainly composed in anticipation of the fall of Babylon (538); and hence it is a prediction to precisely the same extent as Isaiah's own announcements of the destruction of Assyria and the deliverance of Jerusalem (Driver, *Isaiah*, p. 127).

Chap. xiii. falls into three main divisions. A subdivision of each into two nearly equal strophes (Duhm) is possible, though less clearly marked.

i. vv. 2—8. A magnificently poetical description of the impending attack.

(1) The mustering of Jehovah's host on the north-eastern mountains (2—4).

(2) The approach of the avengers, Jehovah at their head, inspiring terror and dismay in the city (5—8).

ii. vv. 9—16. The meaning of the judgment.

(1) The day of Jehovah has at last arrived, heralded by physical convulsions, to sweep wickedness and tyranny from the face of the earth (9—12).

(2) The flight of foreign merchants from the doomed city and the massacre of her population (13—16).

iii. vv. 17—22. The fate of Babylon.

(1) At length the writer lays aside the veil of poetic imagery and announces in express terms that the invaders are the pitiless barbarians of Media, and the object of their attack is Babylon (17—19).

(2) The prophecy then closes with a weird picture of the eternal desolation reserved for the imperial city.

1. The superscription, prefixed by an editor who attributed the prophecy to Isaiah.

The burden] Rather, **The utterance**, or "oracle." The word occurs ten times in the headings of this section of the book (also in ch. xxx. 6). The Heb. is *massā'*, and means literally a "lifting up (of the voice)." See 2 Kings ix. 25. The A.V., following several ancient versions, takes it in its commoner sense of "burden" (thing lifted), a confusion which seems as old as the time of Jeremiah (xxiii. 33—40) and Ezekiel (xii. 10).

which Isaiah...did see] See on i. 1, ii. 1.

2—4. Jehovah musters His hosts.

2. *Lift ye up a banner*] **a signal**, ch. v. 26.

upon the high mountain] Render, **upon a bare mountain**; i.e. one denuded of trees, so that the signal might be clearly distinguished.

the gates of the nobles] The city gates through which the Babylonian

- 3 I have commanded my sanctified ones,
I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger,
Even them that rejoice in my highness.
- 4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of
a great people;
A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered
together:
The LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.
- 5 They come from a far country, from the end of the
heaven,
Even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation,
To destroy the whole land.
- 6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand;
It shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

magnates passed to and fro. The name Babel (Bab-ilu) signifies "Gate of God."

3. Jehovah speaks.

my sanctified (or **consecrated**) *ones*] In ancient times a campaign was inaugurated with religious ceremonies (1 Sam. xiii. 9; Jer. xxii. 7, li. 28 [R.V. marg.]) and each warrior was a consecrated man (1 Sam. xxi. 5).

them that rejoice in my highness] Translate as in R.V. **my proudly exulting ones**, Zeph. iii. 11.

4. Already the prophet seems to hear from afar the din of the gathering multitude.

The noise of a multitude] Better as an exclamation, **Hark, a tumult**. And so in the next clause, **Hark, the uproar of...** The "mountains" are those beyond the Zagros range, N.E. of Babylonia, where the territory of the Medes lay. To understand them as "ideal barriers" (Cheyne) weakens the poetry of the passage.

5. The host is now seen in motion, advancing under the guidance of Jehovah to its appointed goal.

the whole land] Rather, **the whole earth**. The judgment is directed against the Babylonian Empire, which from the writer's point of view was practically co-extensive with the civilised world.

6. The verse is almost identical with Joel i. 15. On the "day of Jehovah" see on ch. ii. 12.

as a destruction from the Almighty] The Heb. phrase contains an alliteration which cannot be easily reproduced in English. The Germans render "wie Gewalt vom Gewaltigen." The word for "Almighty" is the Divine name *Shaddai* (see Ex. vi. 3), but its etymology is doubtful. According to one derivation it comes from the same root as the word for "destruction," so that we might almost venture to translate "like destruction from the Destroyer." This verse, however,

Therefore shall all hands be faint,
And every man's heart shall melt:
And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall
take hold of *them*;
They shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth:
They shall be amazed one at another;
Their faces *shall be as flames*.

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh,
Cruel both *with* wrath and fierce anger,
To lay the land desolate:
And he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.
For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof
shall not give their light:
The sun shall be darkened in his going forth,
And the moon shall not cause her light to shine.
And I will punish the world for *their* evil,
And the wicked for their iniquity;
And I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease,
And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

can hardly be appealed to in support of that view, since it may imply nothing beyond the mere play upon words. (See further Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Church*, pp. 423 f.)

7. "Hands hanging down" and "hearts melting" are frequent images of despair (ch. xix. 1; Ez. xxi. 7; Job iv. 3; Josh. vii. 5, &c.).

8. *they shall be amazed one at another*] i.e. "look in horror on each other."

their faces shall be as flames] Lit. *faces of flames are their faces*, burning with feverish excitement, or perhaps with shame (Ez. vii. 18). There are no exact parallels to the expression; cf. Joel ii. 6; Nah. ii. 10.

9—16. The middle division of the prophecy enlarges on the nature, purpose and effects of this day of Jehovah.

9. *land*] Rather, *earth*, as in v. 5.

10. "The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light," Am. v. 18.

the constellations thereof] The Heb. word (*kēsîl*) is used in the singular in Am. v. 8; Job ix. 9, xxxviii. 31, of a particular constellation, probably Orion (but according to another tradition, the star Canopus). Its meaning, 'fool' or 'foolhardy rebel,' seems to point to some legend of a Titan chained to the sky for his defiance of the gods (Job xxxviii. 31). In the plural ("the Orions") it denotes here Orion and other constellations that vie with it in brilliancy.

11, 12. Jehovah is again the speaker, as in v. 3. The prophet has already in v. 9 intimated the purpose of the judgment; here the thought is added that in its execution the existing generation will be all but

- 12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold;
Even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.
- 13 Therefore I will shake the heavens,
And the earth shall remove out of her place,
In the wrath of the LORD of hosts,
And in the day of his fierce anger.
- 14 And it shall be as the chased roe,
And as a sheep that no *man* taketh up:
They shall every man turn to his own people,
And flee every one into his own land.
- 15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through;
And every one that is joined *unto them* shall fall by
the sword.
- 16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before
their eyes;
Their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.

exterminated; so wide-spread is the wickedness and tyranny of the world.

12. *golden wedge*] Render simply **gold**. Both the words for gold are rare and poetic.

13. By the outbreak of Jehovah's wrath the material universe is shaken to its foundations. Such representations are common in the descriptions of the day of the Lord, and are not to be dismissed as merely figurative. Cf. ch. ii. 12 ff.

14—16. The dispersion and slaughter of the population of Babylon. The prophecy from this point becomes more explicit in its main reference to Babylon.

14. Those who flee to their own land are the foreign residents who had been attracted by the wealth and commerce of Babylon from all parts of the world, cf. Jer. li. 44; Nah. ii. 8, iii. 16.

a sheep that no man taketh up] Better: **sheep with none to gather them**, Nah. iii. 18. For the figure cf. 1 Kings xxii. 17; Ez. xxxiv. 5; Matt. ix. 36.

15. *Every one that is found*] Chiefly the natives of Babylon, who had no land to flee to. The phrase '*every one that is joined unto them*' is better translated, **every one that is caught**.

16. That the capture of Babylon should be marked by the atrocities here spoken of was no doubt to be expected from the character of the Medes (vv. 17 f.), but no such crimes appear to have stained the actual victory of Cyrus. According to Babylonian records he took possession of the city peacefully. (*Records of the Past*, New Ser. v. 144 ff.) Cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 9; Nah. iii. 10; Hos. xiii. 16; 2 Kings viii. 12. The last half of the verse is repeated in Zech. xiv. 2.

17, 18. The description of the character of the invaders, perhaps

Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, 27
 Which shall not regard silver;
 And *as for* gold, they shall not delight in it.
Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; 18
 And they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb;
 Their eye shall not spare children.
 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, 19
 The beauty of the Chaldees' excellency,
 Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

even the mention of their name, is of the nature of a climax to the terrors of the picture.

17. *the Medes*] This Iranian people first became a leading power in Asia when it divided with the Chaldæans the spoils of the Assyrian Empire (B.C. 606), but it was not till the rise of the great conqueror Cyrus that it became a formidable enemy to Babylon. Cyrus, according to the classical historians, was originally a vassal king of the Median Empire, reigning over the narrow territory to which the name Persia or Persis was at first restricted. He is called, however, in Babylonian inscriptions "King of Anzan," which is explained by Assyriologists to be a small kingdom in the north of Elam. (See Sayce, in *Rec. of the Past*, l.c.) About the year 549 he overthrew the ruling Median dynasty and placed himself at the head of the whole empire. It has been argued by some scholars that previous to that event there could be no expectation of a conquest of Babylon by the Medes, and that therefore the prophecy must be dated between 549 and 538. Others again hold that if it had been written after 549 the enemy would have been called the Persians. Both inferences, however, are inconclusive. The first overlooks the fact that before the accession of Cyrus the Medes were a powerful nation, and indeed the only probable human agents of a chastisement of Babylon. And against the second it has to be borne in mind that the name Persia, for the united empire, made its way slowly in antiquity. In the Bible it first becomes common in the time of Ezra, although long after that we still read of Medes *and* Persians (Dan. v. 28, vi. 8, 12) or Persians and Medes (Esth. i. 3, 14, 18). Greek writers also speak of the wars of independence against Xerxes as τὰ Μηδικά. The verse, therefore, furnishes no particular indication of the date of the prophecy.

which shall not regard (regard not) silver...] They cannot be brought off by a ransom. Xenophon puts into the mouth of Cyrus in addressing the Medes the words: οὐ χρημάτων δεόμενοι σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐξήλθετε (*Cyrop.* v. 1, 20).

19. *the Chaldees' excellency*] The territory of the Chaldæans lay near the head of the Persian Gulf. Their dominion over Babylon began with Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar.

as when God overthrew, &c.] See on i. 7 and cf. Am. iv. 11, where the same phrase occurs (also Jer. l. 40).

20—22. Babylon, after its overthrow, shall be a perpetual desolation.

- 20 It shall never be inhabited,
Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation:
Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there;
Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.
- 21 But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there;
And their houses shall be full of doleful creatures;
And owls shall dwell there,
And satyrs shall dance there.
- 22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses,
And dragons in *their* pleasant palaces:

20. *the Arabian*] Cf. Jer. iii. 2. The word seems originally to mean "dweller in the desert," but ultimately acquired the force of a proper name (see Jer. xxv. 24; 2 Chr. ix. 14, &c.). The site of Babylon will be shunned even by the wandering nomad, as an accursed and "uncanny" place.

21, 22. It shall be haunted by wild beasts and creatures of demon kind, like the *jinn* of the Arabs. See ch. xxxiv. 11—15; Zeph. ii. 14 f.; Jer. l. 39, li. 37.

21. *wild beasts of the desert*] The word used means strictly "dwellers in the desert" and is applied to men in Ps. lxxii. 9. In ch. xxxiv. 14 it seems to denote a particular kind of desert creature.

doleful creatures] Probably "howlers," but what kind of howlers are meant is altogether uncertain. Some render "owls," others "jackals," &c. The word does not occur elsewhere. *Owls* should undoubtedly be *ostriches*. The Heb. name (*bēnôth ya'ānah*), as explained by Wetzstein (see Delitzsch, *Comm. on Job*, 2nd Ed., Eng. Tr., vol. II., p. 340) means "daughters of the desert." The Arabs have a similar designation for the bird,—*abu es-sahārâ*, "father of the desert."

satyrs shall dance there] The noun also means "goats," as in Gen. xxxvii. 31; but the old translations have mostly perceived that goat-shaped demons are here intended (so also in ch. xxxiv. 14), the same beings to which Jewish superstition offered sacrifices (Lev. xvii. 7; 2 Chron. xi. 15—A.V. "devils"). The transition from the natural to the supernatural seems strange to our minds, but in the East the belief in weird creatures (*jinn*) inhabiting waste places and dangerous spots is a commonplace.

22. *the wild beasts of the islands*] R.V. **wolves**. The word has certainly nothing to do with that for "island." It probably comes from another root meaning "to howl"; but again it is impossible to specify the particular animal.

their desolate houses] The word is *'almānôth*, "widows," which A.V. following, as so often, Jewish authorities understands figuratively. It is either a by-form or a copyist's error for *'armēnôthām*, **their palaces** (see ch. xxxiv. 13). For *dragons* render **jackals** (R.V.).

And her time *is* near to come,
And her days shall not be prolonged.

For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, 14
And will yet choose Israel,
And set them in their own land;
And the strangers shall be joined with them,
And they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.
And the people shall take them, and bring them to ²
their place:
And the house of Israel shall possess them in the
land of the LORD
For servants and handmaids:
And they shall take them captives, whose captives
they were;
And they shall rule over their oppressors.

And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD ³
shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear,
and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to
serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the ⁴
king of Babylon, and say,

Chap. xiv. 1—23 contains (1) an Introduction connecting the ode with the preceding prophecy (vv. 1—4 *a*), (2) a song of triumph over the king of Babylon (vv. 4 *b*—21), (3) an Epilogue (vv. 22, 23).

1. The immediate result of the judgment on Babylon will be the emancipation of Israel from captivity.

will yet choose Israel] Rather, **will again choose**, as formerly in Egypt (cf. Zech. ii. 12).

the strangers] **the sojourner**, or protected guest; here used, as in later Hebrew, with the sense of “proselyte”: ch. lvi. 3—7; Zech. ii. 11, viii. 21—23.

2. *And the people*] **And peoples** (ch. xlix. 22 f.).

shall possess them] Lit. “serve themselves heirs to them” (Lev. xxv. 46). For the idea cf. ch. lx. 10, 14, lxi. 5.

they shall take them captives, whose captives they were] Jud. v. 12.

3. *thy fear*] Rather **thy unrest**, or “trouble” (R.V.).

the hard bondage] R.V. **service**. From Ex. i. 14. The analogy of the Egyptian oppression is prominent in the writer’s thoughts.

4. *this proverb*] The Hebrew word (*māshāl*) is used in a variety of senses. Originally signifying a similitude, it came naturally to denote a popular proverb or gnomic saying, and finally acquired the sense of a satire or **taunt-song**, as here (Hab. ii. 6; Num. xxi. 27). In ancient Israel wit seems to have passed into sarcasm as readily as in more recent

- How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!
- 5 The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, *and*
the sceptre of the rulers.
- 6 He who smote the people in wrath *with* a continual
stroke,
He that ruled the nations in anger, *is* persecuted, *and*
none hindereth.
- 7 The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet: they break
forth *into* singing.
- 8 Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars of
Lebanon, *saying*,

times. The poem which follows might with equal propriety be described as a dirge (*qînâh*, *θρῆνος* in LXX.), commencing as it does with the characteristic word 'ēkēh, and exhibiting the peculiarity of the elegiac measure (the line is broken by a cæsura in such a manner that the second member is shorter than the first. See on ch. i. 21). Such ironical elegies are common in the prophets of the exile. Another striking example will meet us in ch. xlvii.

4b—21. The song of triumph over the king of Babylon is one of the finest specimens of Hebrew poetry which the Old Testament contains. A division into five strophes, each containing seven long lines, is distinctly recognisable, and the occasional deviations from strict symmetry of form are probably due to defects in the text.

4b—8. The first strophe is like a sigh of relief breathed by the whole of creation, when the disturber of its peace has vanished from the scene.

4. The line may be rendered:

How is the oppressor stilled,—stilled the insolent rage!

The translation *golden city* is an attempt to render the received text, but can hardly be justified. All the ancient versions read instead of *madhēbāh*, *marhēbāh*, a word which combines the ideas of restlessness and insolence (see ch. iii. 5).

5. *the rulers*] here used in the sense of **tyrants**.

6. *He who*] Better, as R.V., **that**; the antecedent being the staff. *is persecuted*, and *none hindereth*] R.V. "with a persecution that none restrained." The parallelism requires instead of "persecution" a noun cognate with the verb rendered "rule," as in the preceding line. An easy emendation (*mīrdath* for *murdāph*) supplies this; and this reading is almost universally accepted. The balance of clauses is then perfect:—

That struck the peoples in anger,—with incessant stroke;

That trod down the nations in wrath,—with unrelenting tread.

7. *they break forth into singing*] A favourite idea in the second part of the book: ch. xlv. 23, xlix. 13, liv. 1, lv. 12.

8. *the fir trees*] Some render "cypresses."

Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.

Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet *thee at* thy coming:

It stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth;

It hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

All they shall speak and say unto thee, 10

Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?

Thy pomp is brought down *to* the grave, *and* the noise of thy viols:

The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

no feller is come up] Assyrian kings frequently mention among their exploits the cutting of trees in Lebanon and Amanus. Nebuchadnezzar, whose inscriptions have been found on Lebanon, doubtless did the same thing.

9—11. The second strophe forms an effective contrast to the first. He who had so long troubled the earth becomes a disturbing presence in the under-world; the earth is now at rest, Sheol is troubled.

9. *Hell from beneath]* Rather, **Sheol beneath**. It is best to retain the Hebrew name of the under-world (*shē'ôl*) as is sometimes done by the Revisers, though not in this passage. An almost exact equivalent would be the Greek *Hades*. For *the dead*, render **the shades** (*rēphā'im*) as in R.V. marg.

the chief ones] lit. "the he-goats," a figurative designation of kings (Jer. l. 8; Zech. x. 3).

11. It is doubtful whether this verse continues the address of the shades. It certainly does not extend further.

For *the grave* read **Sheol**. *the noise of thy viols]* possibly indicating that the king had been cut down suddenly at a riotous feast (see xxi. 5; Dan. v.).

the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee] (The Heb. uses two distinct words for "worm.") His lot is far worse than that of other potentates. No kingly throne is reserved for him in Sheol, but as one who has been denied honourable burial on earth (v. 19) he is laid in the "recesses of the pit" (v. 15) and makes his bed in corruption.

12—15. The third strophe contains the prophet's reflection on the sudden fall of the king of Babylon. That he should go to Sheol at all was a fate never contemplated by his soaring and self-deifying pride.

- 12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!
- 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend *into* heaven,
 I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:
 I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
- 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
- 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

12. *O Lucifer, son of the morning*] In his splendour he is likened to the morning star; which was worshipped by the Babylonians under the name of Istar, and is described in Assyrian by an epithet, *mustilil* (shining star), which seems to correspond to the word here used (Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, on this verse). The translation "Lucifer" (light-bearer) is quite correct, and is needlessly abandoned by the R.V. By some of the fathers the passage was applied to the fall of Satan (cf. Luke x. 18); hence the current use of Lucifer as a name of the devil.

For *weaken*, read *lay prostrate*.

13, 14. Not content with his exalted position the king aspired to equality of rank with the great gods. A similar impiety had already been put by Ezekiel into the mouth of the prince of Tyre (Ez. xxviii. 2, 6, 9, 14).

13. *the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north*] Render: **the Mount of Assembly in the uttermost north**. We have here apparently an allusion to Babylonian mythology which is partly elucidated by Assyrian inscriptions. There the chief gods are spoken of as born in "the house of the mountain-summit of the lands, the mountain of *Aralu*" (Schrader, *Cuneif. Inscr.*, ad loc.). The conception is very obscure, and it has not been proved that the Babylonians located their world-mountain in the north (like the Hindus and Persians). According to Jensen (*Kosmologie der Babylonier*, pp. 201 ff.) the idea of the "world-mountain" originated in the conception that the earth is itself a huge hollow mountain, resting on the primeval ocean. However that may be, there is little room for doubt that the "mount of assembly" in this verse, is the mountain of *Aralu* where the great gods assemble. The opinion once prevalent that Zion is denoted was suggested by a similar phrase in Ps. xlviii. 2; but the idea is obviously out of place in the present context.

14. *I will be like the most High*] Better: **I will make myself like to the Most High**. The sense of all the previous metaphors is gathered up in this sentence. The king arrogates to himself divine honour.

15. *thou shalt be brought down to Sheol*] Such is the end of the

They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, ¹⁶
and consider thee, *saying*,
Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that
 did shake kingdoms;
That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed ¹⁷
 the cities thereof;
That opened not the house of his prisoners?
 All the kings of the nations, *even* all of them, ¹⁸
 Lie in glory, every one in his own house.
 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable ¹⁹
 branch,
And as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust
 through with a sword,

“vaulting ambition that o’erleaps itself.” The Babylonian Hades (*Aralu*) seems to have been conceived as situated *under* the mountain of the gods. The *pit* means Sheol, and the *sides of the pit* are its inmost recesses, the most dismal part of a land of darkness. These apparently are reserved for those who have not obtained honourable burial on earth (see below on vv. 18—20).

16—19. The fourth strophe. The scene here is no longer in Hades, but on the battle-field, where the dead body of the king lies unburied, exposed to the derision of men.

16. *made the earth to tremble*] Better perhaps, **troubled the earth.**

17. *opened not the house of his prisoners*] Translate as R.V. **let not loose his prisoners to their home** (a so-called pregnant construction). But from this point the rhythm is defective, and the text is almost certainly in some disorder. The immediate difficulty might be surmounted by bringing the words “every one in his house” from the end of v. 18 (where they are rhythmically superfluous) to the end of v. 17: thus (with a slight alteration):—

“That let not loose his prisoners,—each to his home.”

But a satisfactory reconstruction of the passage as a whole seems impossible.

18, 19. The contrast here is that between the honourable burial accorded to other kings and the indignity to which the king of Babylon is subjected by being deprived of sepulchral rites.

18. *every one in his own house*] This yields a perfectly good sense as it stands, the “house” being the tomb prepared by the king in his lifetime. But it forms a short half-line where a long one is required by the measure; hence the proposal to transfer the words to v. 17 (see on that verse).

19. *cast out of thy grave*] Better as in R.V., **cast forth away from thy sepulchre**, i.e. flung out unburied. The idea that the body had been *disinterred* is inconsistent with v. 20.

like an abominable branch] A worthless scion of the family.

That go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet.

20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial,
Because thou hast destroyed thy land, *and* slain thy people:

The seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.

21 Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers;

That they do not rise, nor possess the land,
Nor fill the face of the world *with* cities.

and as *the raiment of those that are slain*] Render as R.V. **clothed with** (i.e. "surrounded by") **the slain**, on the field of battle.

that go down to the stones of the pit] A difficult expression. In its present position it is most naturally understood of the hasty and ignominious burial of a dead enemy by casting stones on the body (cf. 2 Sam. xviii. 17). The rhythm, however, demands a short line at this point, and this phrase is much too long. Hence some propose to transfer the words to the beginning of v. 20, where they would open a new strophe, thus:—

"Those that are buried in graves of stone, with them shalt thou not be united in sepulture."

On this view they must be a synonym for honourable sepulture, and the "stones of the pit" would denote stone-built tombs. This seems a less natural sense. A reference to the pit of Sheol (v. 15) is hardly to be expected in this place.

20, 21. The fifth strophe. The guilt of the king of Babylon, which descends like a curse on his children and leads to their extermination. The impression of textual confusion is confirmed by the fact that this last strophe falls short by about two lines of its proper length.

20. *Thou shalt not be joined with them*] i.e. either with the kings of the nations (v. 18) or (if the transposition mentioned be adopted) with those who lie in stone sepulchres.

thou hast destroyed thy land...] The king has acted as a tyrant not only to Israel but to his own people.

shall never be renowned] Rather, **named** (R.V.). Their very names shall be forgotten.

21. *slaughter*] **a place of slaughter** (R.V. marg.).

that they do not rise ..land] R.V. **that they rise not up, and possess the earth.**

fill the face of the world with cities] This could hardly be reckoned a crime, for it would be undoing the wrong that their father had wrought (v. 17). Some render "enemies" or gain that sense by an emendation. Others change the word 'ārīm (cities) into 'iyyīm (ruined heaps). The easiest correction is simply to omit the word, the sense being complete without it.

The elegy ends here.—The passage just considered (vv. 9—20) bears a close resemblance to Ezekiel's dirge over the fall of Pharaoh and his

For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of ²²
hosts,

host (Ez. xxxii. 19 ff.). Many questions of great interest and importance are suggested by both. The most important is how far such representations are to be taken as expressing the fixed belief of the writers or their age with regard to the state after death. Their affinities with Babylonian speculation on that subject, taken in connexion with the fact that such elaborate descriptions of the underworld do not occur before the Exile, may indicate that the imagination of the writers had been influenced by their contact with the religion of their conquerors. In that case it may be reasonable to suppose that they freely availed themselves of the material thus laid to their hand merely as poetic imagery, without meaning to attribute strict objective reality to all the conceptions. At the same time there was a common basis of belief underlying the Hebrew and Babylonian ideas regarding the future state, and all that is essential to the understanding of this passage was probably familiar to the minds of the Israelites before the Exile. In the conception as here presented the following points are to be noted. (1) Sheol, which is figured as a vast subterranean region, is the common gathering-place of all the dead. They exist there as shades, *rēphā'im* (v. 9), a word which is usually explained to mean "feeble ones,"—weak, pithless adumbrations of the living form. These are represented as capable of being roused to a transient interest in human affairs by the arrival amongst them of so distinguished a personage as the king of Babylon; but their ordinary condition is one of utter inactivity, a sort of conscious death rather than life. It is true that the writer speaks only of kings and potentates, and throws little light on the state of the common man after death. Still the Old Testament as a whole knows nothing of separate spheres of existence for the righteous and for the wicked, and that idea is certainly not to be imported into the present passage. (2) We seem to find a clear trace of the antique notion that the lot of the shade in Sheol depends on the fate of the body on earth. The kings who have received due interment sit each on his throne retaining the semblance of their former greatness, while he who was "cast forth away from his sepulchre" is relegated to the "recesses of the pit." This, however, is connected with the conviction that the fate of the body is not accidental; a dishonoured death expresses the final judgment of God on a career of exceptional wickedness. And it is this judgment of God, executed on earth, which is regarded as reflected and perpetuated in the condition of the disembodied spirit. (3) In this way the idea of retribution is extended to the other world. There is indeed an essential difference between the application of the principle here given and that to which a fuller revelation has led us. As we have seen, the retribution here spoken of is only the counterpart of a retribution already manifest on earth, whereas we have learned to look to the future life to redress the inequalities of the present, and to bring about a perfect correspondence between character and destiny, never realised in this world.

And cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant,
And son, and nephew, saith the LORD.

23 I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and
pools of water:

And I will sweep it with the besom of destruction,
saith the LORD of hosts.

24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying,
Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass;
And as I have purposed, so shall it stand:

25 That I will break the Assyrian in my land,
And upon my mountains tread him under foot:
Then shall his yoke depart from off them,

22, 23. The Epilogue, going back on the concluding threat of ch. xiii.

22. *son, and nephew*] A phrase recurring in Gen. xxi. 23; Job xviii.

19. The proper translation is **progeny and offspring**. In old English "nephew" means "grandson." Comp. Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, ii. 8.

29:—

But from the grandsyre to the nephewes sonne,
And all his seede, the curse doth often cleave.

(*Cambridge Comp. to the Bible*, p. 218.)

23. *the bittern*] (ch. xxxiv. 11; Zeph. ii. 14). Usually rendered "hedgehog" (R.V. **porcupine**) in accordance with the LXX. and Vulg. and the analogy of Arabic. The bittern certainly suits the scene best, and it is said to have the hedgehog's trick of rolling itself up into an unrecognisable mass. (Tristram, *Natural History of the Bible*, p. 243.)
pools of water] marshes, caused by the overflow of the Euphrates when the dykes and canals were no longer kept in repair.

CH. XIV. 24—32. TWO ISAIANIC FRAGMENTS.

i. vv. 24—27. An announcement of Jehovah's purpose to destroy the Assyrians on the soil of Canaan. In spite of the absence of a title these verses cannot without violence be explained as a continuation of the oracle on Babylon. They bear every evidence of being a genuine prophecy of Isaiah; and both in form and substance they shew an obvious resemblance to those of ch. x. 5 ff. and ch. xviii. Some critics, indeed, regard them as a misplaced fragment of one or other of these chapters. Without going so far as this we may at least with some confidence assign the passage to the same period of Isaiah's ministry, probably the early years of Sennacherib's reign.

24. *The LORD of hosts hath sworn*] cf. Am. iv. 2, vi. 8, viii. 7; Is. xlv. 23, liv. 9, lxii. 8. The formula is nowhere else used by Isaiah.
come to pass...stand] Combined as in ch. vii. 7.

25. *my mountains*] i.e. the mountain land of Palestine.
then shall his yoke depart...] See ch. ix. 4, x. 27.

And his burden depart from off their shoulders.

This *is* the purpose that is purposed upon the whole ²⁶ earth:

And this *is* the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.

For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall ²⁷ disannul *it*?

And his hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

26, 27. This plan of Jehovah embraces the destinies of all nations (see ch. xxviii. 22, x. 23, viii. 9). The expression "the whole earth" is not to be restricted to the Assyrian Empire, nor on the other hand is the meaning that all other peoples shall suffer the same fate as Assyria; it is simply that the event announced is of world-wide importance, and affects the interests of humanity at large. This indeed followed from the ambitious designs of Assyria, which could not stop short of universal empire. But Isaiah no doubt looked deeper than this, and thought of its bearings on the religious future of mankind. The two verses are a striking testimony to the grandeur of Isaiah's conception of the Divine government.

this is the hand that is stretched out] cf. v. 26, ch. v. 25, ix. 12, &c.

ii. vv. 28—32. An oracle on Philistia. The Philistines, who are rejoicing at the fall of some cruel oppressor, are warned that the dreaded power will soon be re-established in a more terrible form than ever (v. 29). A contrast is then drawn between the miserable fate of the Philistines and the peace and security in store for Israel (v. 30). In v. 31 the warning is repeated, and it is indicated that the formidable enemy is one who comes from the north. Meanwhile ambassadors from a foreign people (no doubt the Philistines) are in Jerusalem awaiting an answer to their proposals; and the prophet gives the answer in the name of Jehovah, as he does in the case of the Ethiopian envoys in ch. xviii.

The situation which best combines the various allusions of the prophecy would seem to be the death of some Assyrian monarch, which in Isaiah's time was invariably the signal for active conspiracy among the states of Palestine (General Introd., pp. xiv f.). That the broken rod is Ahaz and the future oppressor Hezekiah, although suggested by the title, appears to be excluded by v. 31, where the invasion is said to come from the north. It is still less natural to suppose that the rod is a Jewish dominion, and the threatened danger an Assyrian supremacy, because v. 29 seems to imply that the new tyranny springs from the same root as the old. Assuming, then, that two successive Assyrian kings are meant, there are three occasions within the lifetime of Isaiah which satisfy the conditions required by the prophecy: the death of Tiglath-pileser III. in 727; of Shalmaneser IV. in 722; and of Sargon in 705. It is hardly possible with the data at our disposal to decide

- 28 In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.
 29 Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina,
 Because the rod of him that smote thee is broken:
 For out of the serpent's root shall come forth a
 cockatrice,
 And his fruit *shall be* a fiery flying serpent.
 30 And the firstborn of the poor shall feed,
 And the needy shall lie down in safety:
 And I will kill thy root with famine,
 And he shall slay thy remnant.

between these periods. Each of the monarchs named had ravaged the Philistine territory; the death of each was followed by an outbreak of disaffection in which the Philistines took a leading part, and at any time Isaiah would have given the advice to his countrymen which he virtually gives here. On the last occasion we might perhaps have expected a reference to the overthrow of Assyria, as in the answer to the Ethiopians about the same time (ch. xviii.). The first event mentioned corresponds approximately with one of the dates assigned for the death of Ahaz (727), and would therefore go far to vindicate the accuracy of the superscription.

28. The superscription. The word "burden" (*massā*) makes it improbable that the verse was written by Isaiah. It may nevertheless embody a sound tradition.

the year that king Ahaz died] Cf. ch. vi. 1. Probably 727 B.C. (but see Chronological Note, pp. lxxvi f.).

Each verse of the short oracle forms a strophe of four lines.

29. *whole Palestina*] R.V. **Philistia, all of thee**. On the history of the name "Palestine" see G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography*, p. 4. "*All Philistia*" is addressed because the country was broken up into a number of cantons, which might not always be united in political sentiment, as they are at this time.

the rod of him that smote thee] Or simply **the rod that smote thee**, as in R.V. On the reference see introductory note above.

a cockatrice] **a basilisk** (Heb. *ṣepha*). See on xi. 8.

fiery flying serpent] **flying saraph**. See on ch. vi. 2 and cf. xxx. 6. It is probably a creation of the popular imagination, here used poetically. The sense of the metaphors is obvious: the power from which the Philistines had suffered seems at present to have received a fatal blow, but it will recover itself and assume a more deadly form than ever.

30. While Philistia is utterly destroyed, Israel enjoys perfect security under Jehovah's protection (see v. 32).

the firstborn of the poor] must be explained as a superlative—"the poorest of the poor." But many commentators prefer, by slightly altering the word for "firstborn," to read "in my meadow the poor shall feed" (cf. xxx. 23).

he shall slay] In spite of the change of person, the subject is still

Howl, O gate; cry, O city;

Thou, whole Palestina, *art* dissolved:

For there shall come from the north a smoke,

And none *shall be* alone in his appointed times.

What shall *one* then answer the messengers of the ³¹ nation?

That the LORD hath founded Zion,

And the poor of his people shall trust in it.

Jehovah, not the Assyrian. Or the verb might be equivalent to a passive, as in R.V. ("shall be slain").

31. As in v. 29 the prophet had rebuked the premature rejoicing of the Philistines, so here he calls them to public lamentation in view of the advancing enemy.

thou...art dissolved] Render as an imper. **melt away, entire Philistia!** *Smoke* may be either a symbol of war (Jer. i. 13 f.) or it may be a vivid picture of the burning villages that mark the track of the invader. The phrase *from the north* points almost unmistakeably to the Assyrians (see on ch. x. 27).

none shall be...times] Most critics render: **there is no straggler in his battalions** (cf. ch. v. 27). The last word closely resembles that for "appointed times," but is differently vocalised, and does not occur elsewhere.

32. The oracle ends, in a manner characteristic of Isaiah, with a piece of practical advice to the political leaders of the state. Some words have probably dropped out of the first half of the verse.

the messengers of the nation] are no doubt Philistine envoys endeavouring to negotiate an alliance with Judah. They are probably to be regarded as actually waiting in Jerusalem while the court deliberates on the expediency of joining the rebellion. The prophet's answer is unhesitating.

that the LORD hath founded Zion] A leading principle of Isaiah's later ministry; see on ch. viii. 18, xxviii. 16, and General Introduction, pp. xxxvi, lxii.

the poor of his people...] Better as R.V., **in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge.**

CH. XV. XVI. AN ORACLE ON MOAB.

These chapters describe a terrible disaster which has overtaken, or is about to overtake, the proud and hitherto prosperous nation of Moab. Ch. xvi. 13 f. is a postscript, which states unambiguously that an earlier prophecy is here taken up and reaffirmed in its substance, the time of its fulfilment being fixed within a term of three years.) The language leaves it uncertain whether the original composition was strictly a prophecy or a poetic lament over a visitation which the writer had actually witnessed. (The element of prediction appears in xv. 9 and xvi. 12; but the rest of the passage reads like a description of current events, and

certainly exhibits a most minute and accurate knowledge of the geography of the trans-Jordanic region. The writer betrays a certain sympathy with the misfortunes of Moab, although he expresses the conviction that the notorious arrogance of that people demanded a retribution such as it has experienced.

The question of date and authorship is complicated by the peculiar form in which the oracle is presented. (It is obvious that the Epilogue (xvi. 13 f.) belongs to a later date than the body of the prophecy, and there is nothing whatever to suggest that both are from the same author. The internal evidence, indeed, is strongly opposed to such an hypothesis. While the Epilogue bears every mark of Isaiah's rapid and pregnant style that could be expected in so short a piece, the original oracle (xv. 1—xvi. 12) presents a singular contrast to the prophecies of Isaiah.) The pathetic, elegiac strain of this passage, its outflow of purely human sympathy towards the victims of the calamity, its poverty in religious ideas, and its diffuse and laboured style, combine to stamp it with a character foreign to his genius. And this general impression is confirmed by an examination of the vocabulary, which differs widely from that of Isaiah. On these and other grounds the majority of critics since Gesenius have been led to the conclusion that we have here the work of some unknown prophet, which was republished by Isaiah with an appendix from his own hand.

With regard to the date of the original prophecy the chief indications are these: (1) Although the assailants of Moab are nowhere named, we may at least infer from the fact that the fugitives took refuge in Edom (xvi. 1), that their country had been invaded from the north. (2) It also appears from xvi. 1—6 that at this time a strong monarch sat on the throne of Judah and held the Edomites in subjection (see the notes below). This last circumstance would seem to take us back at least to the days of Uzziah, the suzerainty of Edom having been lost in the beginning of the reign of Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 6) and never recovered during the lifetime of Isaiah. Perhaps the most plausible conjecture that has been offered is that of Hitzig (adopted by a number of subsequent commentators), that the prophecy refers to the subjugation of Moab by the North Israelites under Jeroboam II., the contemporary of Uzziah. It is true that there is no particular mention of this campaign in the Old Testament, but we know that Jeroboam extended the boundaries of his kingdom to the "sea of the Arabah" (2 Ki. xiv. 25; Am. vi. 14), and it is reasonable to suppose that this involved an invasion of Moab. In every respect the circumstances of the time are in harmony with the allusions of the prophecy. Hitzig's further suggestion, however, that the author was Jonah the son of Amittai (2 Ki. xiv. 25), though ingenious, rests on no solid foundation. There are two earlier wars of North Israel against Moab which might conceivably be thought of in this connexion. One is the conquest of the country by Omri in the 9th century, known to us from the famous Moabite Stone, which commemorates the war of revenge waged by Mesha against Ahab. The other is the campaign of Jehoram, Ahab's son, in alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah (2 Ki. iii.). This can hardly be the occasion of the prophecy, since at that time Judah took part in the subjugation of Moab,

and would not be likely to be appealed to by the fugitives for succour (xvi. 1 ff.). Nevertheless the Biblical account of that campaign throws a valuable light on some features of the passage, and illustrates the barbarity with which these frontier wars were conducted. We read that the allies "beat down the cities; and on every good piece of land they cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the fountains of water, and felled all the good trees: until in Kir-hareseth only they left the stones thereof" (2 Ki. iii. 25). We can readily suppose that Jeroboam's invasion was carried out with equal thoroughness.

The date of the Epilogue (assuming it to be Isaiah's) is comparatively unimportant. There is no doubt that Isaiah has the Assyrians in view as the agents of the Divine sentence against Moab. Perhaps the most likely time for such a prediction would be about 711, when the Moabites were in revolt against Sargon. At the time of Sennacherib's great expedition they appear to have held aloof from the conspiracy and maintained their allegiance to Assyria.

— The passage falls into three sections:

i. Ch. xv. The distress of Moab. In one night her two chief cities have been ruined (*v.* 1); the sanctuaries are crowded with despairing suppliants, and a cry of agony ascends from all her public places (2—4). The fugitives are then seen making their way through the desolate country, and collecting their possessions at the brook of the Arabah, in order to carry them over into Edom (5—7). For the war-cry has circled round the whole land so that no refuge can be found within it (8), and yet worse things are in store for the survivors (9, xvi. 2).

ii. Ch. xvi. 1—6. Moab vainly seeks protection from Jerusalem. From Edom the fugitives are represented as sending a present (*v.* 1) to Jerusalem, along with a piteous and flattering appeal to the Jewish monarchy (3, 4; *v.* 2 appears to break the connexion) whose glories are extolled in terms almost worthy of a Messianic prophecy (5). But the petition is rejected because of the well-known pride and faithlessness of the Moabitish nationality (6).

iii. xvi. 7—12. There thus remains no hope for Moab, and the poet once more strikes up a lamentation over the ruined vineyards of the once fertile country where the vintage song is now stilled for ever (7—10). The personal sympathy of the writer finds clearer expression here than in the earlier part of the poem (9, 11); although his last word must be a religious application of the calamity of Moab as proving the impotence of its national deities (12).

iv. Then follows the Epilogue (xvi. 13, 14), really a new prophecy announcing the fall of Moab within a very brief space of time.

The parallel prophecy on Moab in Jer. xlviii. is a greatly amplified variation of this ancient oracle. With the exception of xv. 1, xv. 8—xvi. 5 and xvi. 12 ff. nearly every verse in these two chapters occurs in a more or less altered form in Jeremiah (the references are given in the notes below). A comparison of the two passages affords an instructive illustration of the freedom used by prophetic writers in handling the remains of ancient literature.

1. The verse stands somewhat apart from the sequel of the poem. It announces the catastrophe which has placed the entire country at the

15 The burden of Moab.

Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and*
brought to silence;

Because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and*
brought to silence;

2 He is gone up *to* Bajith, and *to* Dibon, the high
places, to weep:

mercy of the invaders, viz. the fall of the two chief cities of Moab. What follows is a description, not of the further progress of the campaign, but first of the universal mourning caused by this sudden blow, and second, of the flight of the inhabitants. The opening word *because* seems to have the force of an interjection, equivalent to "yea" or "surely."

in the night] may be meant literally (by a night attack), or we may render "in a night," i.e. "suddenly."

Ar] the capital of Moab, lay on the Arnon (Num. xxi. 15, 28). It is not to be confounded (as is sometimes done) with the later capital Rabba, which lies about 10 miles further south. *Kir of Moab* is the modern Kerak, some 17 miles S. of the Arnon. It is perhaps identical with *Kir-hareseth* or *Kir Heres* (ch. xvi. 7, 11; 2 Ki. iii. 25); its situation has always been considered well-nigh impregnable. These two cities were both S. of the Arnon and therefore within the proper territory of Moab. Those mentioned in vv. 2—4 on the other hand were in the fertile district to the north (now called El-Belka), which Israel claimed for the tribes of Reuben and Gad. The possession of this coveted tract of country was one great motive of the interminable wars between the two nations. Mesha's inscription on the Moabite Stone is really an account of the reconquest of this region from Ahab. At the time of the prophecy Moab must have long held undisputed possession of these lands.)

2—4. The wailing of Moab.

2. (Cf. Jer. xlviii. 37.) *He is gone up...to weep*] The sense of the clause is uncertain. If *Bayith* be a proper name the best rendering would be that of R.V. marg. **Bayith and Dibon are gone up to the high-places to weep.** But *Bayith* enters so frequently into compound place-names in this region (*Beth-Diblathaim*, *Beth-Baal-meon*, *Beth-Bamoth*) that it is hardly likely to have been used alone of a particular town. Some accordingly take it in its ordinary sense of "house" (here "temple") and translate, "He is gone up to the temple, and Dibon to the high places..."—a very harsh construction. The most satisfactory solution of the difficulty is that proposed by Duhm, who changes *bayith* into *bath* and reads **the daughter of Dibon** (Jer. xlviii. 18) **is gone up to the high places....** The "high places" are of course the local sanctuary.

Dibon (where the Moabite Stone was found) is only a few miles from the Arnon, and is naturally the first to receive tidings of the fall of the southern fortresses. On the whole the description observes the geographical order south to north,

Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba:

On all their heads *shall be* baldness, *and* every beard cut off.

In their streets they shall gird themselves with sack-³ cloth:

On the tops of their houses, and in their streets,

Every one shall howl, weeping abundantly.

And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh:

Their voice shall be heard *even* unto Jahaz:

Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out;

His life shall be grievous unto him.

My heart shall cry out for Moab;

His fugitives *shall flee* unto Zoar,

Moab shall howl] Better **howleth** (other verbs also to be translated as presents), a peculiar onomatopoetic form occurring also in *v.* 3 and *xvi.* 7.

Nebo] is a town mentioned on the Moabite Stone near the mountain of the same name. It lay due east of the mouth of the Jordan; *Medeba* a short distance to the S. For *over* render **on**.

on all their heads shall be baldness...] On the signs of mourning mentioned here and in *v.* 3 see *ch.* iii. 24, xxii. 12; *Mic.* i. 16; *Job* i. 20; *Jer.* xli. 5.

3. (*Jer.* xlviii. 37 f.) *on the tops of their houses*] See on xxii. 1. The word *streets* should not be used twice; substitute in the second case **broad places** (as in R.V.).

weeping abundantly] lit. "going down in weeping," an unusually strong figure. In other passages the eye is said to "go down in tears" (*Jer.* ix. 18; *Lam.* i. 16, iii. 48); but nowhere else is the whole being spoken of as dissolved in weeping.

4. (Cf. *Jer.* xlviii. 34.) *Heshbon* and *Elealeh* (often mentioned together) are respectively about 4 and 6 miles N.E. of Nebo. Heshbon, once the capital of the Amorites (*Num.* xxi. 26) and afterwards an Israelitish city (*Num.* xxxii. 37; *Josh.* xiii. 17, xxi. 39), is at the time of the prophecy in the possession of Moab. The site of *Jahaz*, where Sihon gave battle to the Israelites (*Num.* xxi. 23), has not been discovered; probably it was some distance south from Heshbon.

the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out] omit "shall" with R.V. Cf. *ch.* xxxiii. 7. The "heroes of Moab" are mentioned in a similar plight in *Jer.* xlviii. 41.

his life shall be grievous unto him] Rather, as in R.V., **his soul trembleth within him** (ethical dative).

5—9. The flight of the Moabites.

5. (*Jer.* xlviii. 34, 5, 3.) The new theme is introduced by an expression of the writer's sympathy with the homeless fugitives: *My heart crieth out for Moab* (cf. *xvi.* 9, 11).

his fugitives] R.V. renders less suitably "her nobles." The word as

- A heifer of three years old:
 For *by* the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall
 they go it up;
 For *in* the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry
 of destruction.
 6 For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate:
 For the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there
 is no green thing.

pointed means "bolts," which is here taken as a symbol for princes. But it is better, with the Targum and nearly all modern commentators, to change the vowel, and translate "fugitives" as in xliii. 14, where, curiously enough, the A.V. gives the same rendering as the R.V. here. The R.V. however is right in using the fem. "her"; Moab is here regarded not as a people but as a land.

Zoar (Gen. xix. 22) lies near the S.E. corner of the Dead Sea; the flight therefore is southward, towards Edom.

a heifer of three years old] R.V. is better: **to Eglath-shelishiyah**; i.e. probably, "the third Eglath." The locality is not known.

the mounting up (the ascent, R.V.) of Luhith is located by Eusebius' Onomasticon between Rabba and Zoar.

the way of Horonaim] Jeremiah (xlviii. 5) speaks of "the slope of H.," which lay apparently (v. 34) between Zoar and Eglath-shelishiyah.

6. (Jer. xlviii. 34.) the waters of Nimrim are generally supposed to be connected with Beth-nimrah (Num. xxxii. 36), now Tell-nimrin, on the Wadi Shaib, flowing into the Jordan about 8 miles from its mouth. A place in the south of Moab would perhaps suit the context better, and explorers have found a Wadi Numeirah running into the Dead Sea a little south of Kerak. Eusebius also (Onomast.) says that the place was known in his day under the name Βηρυμαρείμ (=the Heb. *mê Nimrîm*, "waters of N."), and lay to the N. of Zoar. On the stopping of the waters by an enemy, see 2 Ki. iii. 25.

hay...grass] Better: **grass...tender grass** (R.V.).

7. (Jer. xlviii. 36.) The fugitives have now reached the border of their own land, and prepare to cross into Edom. The boundary between the two countries was formed by the Wadi el-Ahsa ("valley of water-pits," the scene of the miracle in 2 Ki. iii. 16 ff. See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Ch.* p. 147). In all probability this Wadi is identical with the brook of the willows here mentioned. There is, however, some doubt about the correct translation of the name, arising from its similarity to the "brook of the wilderness" in Am. vi. 14 (here pl. *ʾarābîm*, there sing. *ʾarābâh*. Cf. 2 Ki. xiv. 25 "sea of the *ʾarābâh*"). Some regard the word here as an irregular pl. of that used by Amos, and render "brook of the wastes." But the two brooks are not necessarily identical, and even if they are, the translation "willows" (or rather, "poplars") is perhaps to be preferred. Cf. ch. xlv. 4; Ps. cxxxvii. 2, &c., for the name of the tree.

Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that 7
 which they have laid up,
 Shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.
 For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; 8
 The howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling
 thereof *unto* Beer-elim.
 For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: 9
 For I will bring more upon Dimon,
 Lions upon him that escapeth of Moab,
 And upon the remnant of the land.

the abundance] is lit. "surplus." *that which they have laid up* is in Heb. a single word, meaning something entrusted for safe keeping. Instead of *carry away to* read **carry over**. —

8. Summing up the effect of the previous description and explaining the forsaking of the land.

the cry (of destruction, v. 5) *is gone round...*] We should expect the two places in the second half of the verse to mark the extreme limits of the country—the "Dan and Beersheba" of Moab. *Eglaim* is probably the village *Algalaiu* mentioned by Eusebius as lying 8 Roman miles S. of Rabba. *Beer-elim* ("well of the mighty ones"?) is unknown, but has been plausibly identified with the "well" (*Bē'ēr*) of Num. xxi. 16—18, in northern Moab.

9. *the waters of Dimon*] *Dimon* is generally supposed to be another form of *Dibon*, chosen for the sake of an alliteration with the word for "blood" (*dām*). The conjecture may be taken for what it is worth; it has the authority of Jerome, who says, "usque hodie indifferenter et Dimon et Dibon hoc oppidulum dicitur," and we know of no other place Dimon.

I will bring more (lit. "additional [evils]" *upon Dimon*] This is the first strictly prophetic utterance in the passage; the speaker is Jehovah.

lions upon...Moab] Better: **upon the fugitives of Moab** (sc. I will bring) a **lion**. The "lion" is undoubtedly a symbol for a terrible conqueror, though it is difficult to say who is meant. It can hardly be Jeroboam II., who has already done his worst, and it is still less likely that Judah is meant. The peculiar prophetic form of the latter part of the verse has suggested to some commentators that it may have been inserted by Isaiah in the original oracle. In that case the "lion" would almost of necessity denote the Assyrians.

CH. XVI.

1—6. Arrived in Edom, the Moabitish refugees are within the sphere of Judah's political influence (see Introd. Note). Their first anxiety, therefore, is to secure protection and the right of asylum by sending an embassy to Jerusalem.

- 16 Send ye the lamb *to* the ruler of the land
 From Sela to the wilderness,
 Unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.
 2 For it shall be, *that*, as a wandering bird cast out of
 the nest,
 So the daughters of Moab shall be *at* the fords of
 Arnon.
 3 Take counsel, execute judgment;

1. *Send ye the lamb*] R.V. **the lambs**. The imper. expresses dramatically the result of the deliberations of the Moabites. The word "lamb" is to be taken collectively; it denotes the tribute in kind which the Moabites had been accustomed to pay to the kings of Israel (2 Ki. iii. 4), but which they now propose to send to the king of Judah, the "ruler of the land" (of Edom).

from Sela to the wilderness] R.V. less appropriately "which is toward the wilderness." The wilderness is the desert tract between Sela and Jerusalem which would have to be traversed by the messengers of Moab. *Sela* ("rock"), a city of Edom (2 Ki. xiv. 7), is commonly supposed from the identity of the designations to be the later Petra. There is, however, no positive evidence in support of the identification; and Jud. i. 36 seems to point to a locality near the southern end of the Dead Sea (See Moore, *Commentary on Judges*, pp. 56 f.).

the mount...Zion] ch. x. 32.

2. The verse gives no good sense in its present position. Not only does it obscure the connexion between v. 1 and v. 3, but its language of prediction reveals an affinity with xv. 9. It has probably been misplaced (so Duhm), and the fact that the Moabites are represented as at "the fords of Arnon," instead of in Edom, confirms the impression that we have here an addition to the original prophecy. The images of the **wandering birds** and the **scattered nest** (render as in R.V.) remind us of Isaiah (ch. x. 14, xxxi. 5). The *daughters of Moab* are the provincial towns of Moab, or their inhabitants (cf. Ps. xlviii. 11).

3—5. The address of Moab, through its ambassadors, to the court of Judah. Most of the older commentators took a different view of these verses, holding that here the prophet points out to the Moabites the way of national salvation through the practice of righteousness, and exhorts them in particular to shew kindness to any Israelitish refugees who might seek a home in that country. This interpretation appears to be followed by the A.V. (see on v. 4). But such an exhortation is altogether out of keeping with the tone of the prophecy, and would be very ill-timed in the circumstances to which Moab was then reduced. The continuity of thought is far better maintained on the view given above, which is that of most recent scholars.

3. *Take counsel, execute judgment*] Or, **apply counsel, perform arbitration**; i.e. "adopt wise and effectual measures to defend us from our enemies."

Make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday;

Hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth.

Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab;

Be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler:

For the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth,

The oppressors are consumed out of the land.

And in mercy shall the throne be established:

And he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David,

Judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

We have heard of the pride of Moab; *he is very* proud:

make thy shadow as the night...] Be to us as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (ch. xxxii. 2).

bewray not] lit. "uncover not."

4. *Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab*] Rather, **Let the outcasts of Moab sojourn with thee** (as protected guests). This implies a slight change of the vowel points, but has the authority of the chief ancient versions in its favour. The A.V. is a correct translation of the text as pointed, and far preferable to that of R.V., which joins the word Moab to the next clause, a construction unnatural in the extreme, although suggested by the Heb. accents. The vocative use of "Moab" in A.V., and probably also in the Massoretic text, implies that vv. 3—5 are conceived as an address to the Moabites.

for the extortioner is at an end...] The rest of the verse cannot, in this form, be uttered by the Moabites. We may either suppose with Dillmann that a word meaning "until" has been lost, or (better) with Hitzig take the clauses as protasis to v. 5, "for *when* the extortioner, &c." This is perhaps preferable to regarding it as a reflection of the prophet himself.

the spoiler] Strictly **spoiling** (R.V.).

5. *And in mercy*] If we follow Hitzig's view of v. 4 this would be rendered "then in mercy." The phraseology of the verse is Messianic (see esp. ch. ix. 6) but not exclusively so (cf. Prov. viii. 28). In the lips of the Moabites the language is that of extravagant and (as v. 6 appears to intimate) insincere adulation. It implies an offer of perpetual submission on the part of the Moabites to the Davidic dynasty, and therefore the question whether the throne be that of Judah or that of Moab is immaterial.

and he shall sit...judging] Better: **and there shall sit upon it in faithfulness in the tabernacle of David** (cf. Am. ix. 11) **one who judgeth, &c.**

hasting righteousness] i.e. as R.V. has it, **swift to do righteousness.**

6. (Jer. xlviii. 29, 30.) The prayer is rejected. The writer, speak-

Even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath:
But his lies *shall not be so*.

7 Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl:

For the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn;
 surely *they are* stricken.

8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, *and* the vine of Sibmah:

The lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof,

They are come *even* unto Jazer, they wandered *through* the wilderness:

Her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.

ing in the name of his countrymen, exposes the hollowness of Moab's professions of allegiance and submission, as altogether opposed to the arrogant spirit for which the nation was notorious. On the pride of Moab cf. (besides Jer. xlviii. 29) ch. xxv. 11; Zeph. ii. 8. The national spirit has found an enduring monument in the inscription of the Moabite Stone.

but *his lies* shall *not be so*] Better: **the unreality of his pratings** (a contemptuous word, cf. ch. xlv. 25). R.V. "his boastings are nought."

7, 8. (Cf. Jer. xlviii. 31, 32.) Moab's last hope being thus disappointed, the poet resumes his lament over the doomed people.

7. *the foundations*] R.V. renders rightly **raisin-cakes**. These cakes of compressed grapes are mentioned less as an article of commerce than as a delicacy used at religious feasts (cf. Hos. iii. 1, R.V.). The word never means "foundations." The parallel passage in Jeremiah substitutes the tamer "men." *Kir-hareseth* is the same as Kir-heres (v. 11) and perhaps identical with Kir of Moab (xv. 1).

surely they are stricken] Better, as R.V.: **utterly stricken** (apposition to "ye").

8. *the fields*] means here as in Deut. xxxii. 32 "vineyards."

the vine of Sibmah] Sibmah, in the vicinity of Heshbon, must have been famous for a choice variety of vines, which are here described by a title resembling that used in ch. v. 2 for the "choicest vine" of Jehovah's vineyard.

the lords of the heathen...thereof] Better: **whose choice grapes struck down** (i.e. intoxicated) **the lords of the nations**. For the figure see ch. xxviii. 1. The wine of Sibmah was found on the tables of princes far and near, and its potent effects were well known.

The remainder of the verse celebrates the extensive cultivation of this variety of the vine on the east of the Jordan. The writer is not thinking of anything so prosaic as the export trade in the wine of Sibmah; he represents the whole vine culture of the district under the image of a

Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah:

I will water thee *with* my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh:

For the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen.

And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field;

And in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting:

The treaders shall tread out no wine in *their* presses; I have made *their* vintage shouting to cease.

Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab,

And mine inward parts for Kir-haresh.

And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place,

single vine, which reached to Jazer in the north, strayed to the desert on the east, and passed to the (Dead) Sea on the west.

9—11. The poet gives vent to his sympathy for Moab. These verses are amongst the most beautiful in the poem.

9. (Jer. xlviii. 32.) *with the weeping of Jazer*] i.e. in sympathy with the weeping of J. *I will water thee*] lit. drench thee.

for the shouting.. fallen] Render with R.V.: **for upon thy summer-fruits** (or rather "fruit-gathering") **and upon thy harvest the battle shout is fallen.** The word for "shout" (*hêdād*) is used both of the joyous shout of the wine-treaders (Jer. xxv. 30) and of the wild war-cry of soldiers in a charge (Jer. li. 14). It has the former sense in v. 10, but the latter here. "Harvest" is used for "vintage" (*qāçîr* for *bāçîr*) as in ch. xviii. 5 (see the note).

10. (Jer. xlviii. 33.) *shouting* and *vintage shouting* are entirely different words; the first may be translated by **joyful noise** as in R.V.

the treaders shall tread out no wine] i.e. there shall be none treading wine. In the last clause—"I have stilled"—the voice of Jehovah is again heard; some critics, however, read "is stilled."

11. (Jer. xlviii. 36.) *my bowels shall sound like a harp*] omit "shall" with R.V. The poet's emotion flows forth spontaneously in the strains of the elegy. The *bowels* are the seat of the more intense emotions (Job xxx. 27), especially of compassion (Jer. iv. 19, xxxi. 20; Cant. v. 4). *Kir-haresh*] Kir-heres. See on v. 7.

12. The failure of Moab's religious confidence. The verse reproduces the thought of xv. 2, at the beginning of the elegy. It reads thus: **and when Moab appears, when he wearies himself, upon the high place, and enters his sanctuary to pray, he shall prevail nothing.** Ewald however turns the verse into a promise of the conversion of Moab, by

That he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail.

- 13 This *is* the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning Moab since that time.
- 14 But now the LORD hath spoken, saying,
Within three years, as the years of a hireling,
And the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all
that great multitude;
And the remnant *shall be* very small *and* feeble.

continuing the protasis to the end of the present text, and completing the sense as follows (guided by Jer. xlvi. 13) :—"and prevails nothing, **then he shall be ashamed of Chemosh, and turn to Jehovah.**"

13, 14. The Epilogue. See Introductory Note.

13. *since that time*] Render **aforetime**. The expression is used both of the recent past (as in 2 Sam. xv. 34) and of a remote or even immemorial past (as Prov. viii. 22; Ps. xciii. 2). The sense here is indeterminate.

14. If ch. xv. 1—xvi. 12 describe real events, the verse shews that in the interval Moab had recovered some measure of its former prosperity.

as the years of a hireling] As the hireling serves for the stipulated time, but not a moment longer, so the judgment on Moab shall not be deferred beyond the space of three years (cf. ch. xxi. 16).

the glory of Moab (v. 6) shall be contemned] or "contemptible."

the remnant...feeble] lit. "the remnant shall be small, little (ch. x. 25, xxix. 17—of time), not strong." It is hazardous to assume that the "remnant" here is the nucleus of a regenerated Messianic community.

CH. XVII. 1—11. THE APPROACHING OVERTHROW OF DAMASCUS AND NORTH ISRAEL.

This oracle, the Isaianic authorship of which is beyond question, should be read *after* ch. ix. 8—x. 4 and *before* ch. vii. It deals mainly with the fate of the Northern Kingdom; but the combination of Syria and Ephraim in one prophecy shews that the league between these two nations had already been formed. With a serenity of faith which is more akin to the contemptuous attitude of ch. vii. 4 than to the impassioned utterances of ix. 8 ff., the prophet discloses the inevitable issues of an alliance based on practical rejection of Jehovah and the adoption of foreign idolatries (*vv.* 10 f.). The date is certainly prior to the Assyrian conquest of Damascus (c. 732), and since there is no mention of the outbreak of hostilities against Judah, we may fix it in the early days of the coalition (c. 735).

The passage divides itself into four sections:—

- i. *vv.* 1—3. An announcement of the impending ruin of the kingdom of Damascus, Israel's bulwark against the Assyrians.

The burden of Damascus.

17

Behold, Damascus *is* taken away from *being* a city,
And it shall be a ruinous heap.

The cities of Aroer *are* forsaken:

2

They shall be for flocks,

Which shall lie down, and none shall make *them*
afraid.

The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim,

3

ii. vv. 4—6. A figurative description of the fate of Ephraim: his strength shall be consumed until only an insignificant remnant is left.

iii. vv. 7, 8. The effect of this display of the Divine power on men's religious attitude.

iv. vv. 9—11. A renewed description of the judgment, which is shewn to be the fruit of Israel's apostasy and devotion to heathen cults.

1—3. The fate of Damascus.

1. *The burden of Damascus*] See on ch. xiii. 1. The title explains why the prophecy was included amongst those against foreign nations, but is not quite accurate as a description of its contents. The overthrow of Damascus, although mentioned first, is but an incident of the humiliation of its ally Ephraim, which is the principal theme of the oracle.

a ruinous heap] The words in Heb. are in apposition; one of them is an anomalous formation, is wanting in the LXX., and is rejected by some critics as possibly a dittography.

2. *The cities of Aroer*] Hardly, "the (two) cities Aroer" (gen. of appos.), as a name for the trans-Jordanic territory. If Aroer be really a proper name, the phrase must be explained by the analogy of Jos. xiii. 17 "the daughter cities of A." But where was Aroer? The best-known town of the name, that on the Arnon (Num. xxxii. 34; Deut. ii. 36, &c.), is much too far south and belonged to Moab. There seems to have been another in Ammon (Jos. xiii. 25), but it too is outside the territory of Damascus and can scarcely have been important enough to give its name to a district. We must either *assume* an unknown Aroer in Syria, or take the word in an appellative sense ("the ruined cities are forsaken") or else adopt the text of the LXX., which reads "(Damascus shall be) deserted for ever" (omitting "cities").

shall be for flocks...afraid] cf. v. 17, xxxii. 14, and Zeph. iii. 13; Job xi. 19.

3. *The fortress also...Ephraim*] Perhaps: **And the bulwark shall be removed from Ephraim**, meaning the kingdom of Damascus, which had been like a breakwater, sheltering Israel from the Assyrian onslaught. It is, however, equally possible to understand the "fortress" of Samaria, or collectively of the fortified cities of North Israel; and the parallelism with the next clause may be thought to favour this sense. But the mention of Samaria seems premature in this stanza, which deals with the ruin of Syria.

And the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria:

They shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

4 And in that day it shall come to pass,
That the glory of Jacob shall be made thin,
And the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.

5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn,

And reapeth the ears *with* his arm;

And it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

6 Yet gleanings grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree,

Two *or* three berries in the top of the uppermost bough,

Four *or* five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof,

and the remnant of Syria: they shall be] A.V. here follows the accentuation of the Hebrew; it is better to neglect it and render **and the remnant of Syria shall be**, &c., letting the first member of the verse end with "Damascus."

4—6. The fate of Ephraim, in three figures: wasting disease; the reaping of corn; the gathering of olives.

4. *in that day*] simultaneously with the judgment on Syria. *the glory of Jacob*] i.e. his might, his population, his prosperity, &c. (cf. v. 3). *made thin*] better, **enfeebled**. *fatness...lean*] cf. ch. x. 16.

5. The succeeding pictures are exceedingly graphic,—an evidence of Isaiah's intense interest in rural life. The reaper gathers the stalks of wheat with one hand and with the other cuts off the ears close to the head.

and it shall be...Rephaim] Render as R.V. **and it shall be as when one gleaneth ears**, &c. See Ruth ii. 2, 7, 15 ff. The clause might perhaps be read as the beginning of v. 6; one simile passing insensibly into another. The "valley of Rephaim," (= "valley of the giants,") Jos. xv. 8, xviii. 16 (cf. 2 Sam. v. 18, 22, xxiii. 13),—a fertile plain to the south of Jerusalem where Isaiah had watched the reapers and gleaners at work.

6. *Yet gleanings grapes...olive tree*] Render (cf. R.V.) **And gleanings shall be left in it as at the beating of an olive tree**. The olives were struck down from the higher branches with a stick (ch. xxiv. 13; Deut. xxiv. 20); the few that were overlooked were left for the poor.

the uppermost bough] The Hebr. word does not occur again except in v. 9, where (if correct) it must bear a different sense.

the outmost fruitful branches] Render, **the branches of the fruitful tree**,—the last word containing perhaps a play on the name Ephraim.

Saith the LORD God of Israel.

At that day shall a man look to his Maker, 7
And his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of
Israel.

And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his 8
hands,

Neither shall respect *that* which his fingers have made,
Either the groves, or the images.

In that day shall his strong cities be 9

7, 8. These verses do not necessarily point to a conversion of the few surviving Ephraimites. They rather describe the impression produced by the vindication of Jehovah's righteousness on mankind at large. Both in thought and structure, they interrupt the continuity of the oracle, and may have been inserted later (doubtless by the prophet himself). If they are removed we have three equal strophes, the first two ending with a "saith Jehovah," and the last two beginning with "in that day."

7. *look to his Maker*] cf. xxii. 11. "Look to," i.e. regard with trust and veneration.

8. *the work of his hands...that which his fingers have made*] phrases used of idols in ch. ii. 8, 20, xxxi. 7.

the altars...either the groves or the images] These words overburden the rhythm of the verse and are probably explanatory glosses. An allusion to the brazen-altar of Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 10—13) is far-fetched, even if not absolutely excluded by the date. The two last-mentioned objects are never referred to elsewhere by Isaiah.

the groves] R.V., rightly, **the Asherim**. The *Ashērah* or Sacred Pole was an emblem of divinity which seems to have stood regularly by the side of the altar in a Canaanitish sanctuary (Jud. vi. 13, 25; Deut. xvi. 21; 2 Ki. xviii. 4, &c.). It is regarded by some as an artificial survival of the sacred tree, under which the altar stood; by others as the symbol (or image) of a goddess of the same name. Whether a *goddess* Ashērah was actually worshipped is a much controverted point; if so, she was probably nothing more than an impersonation of the material symbol here referred to. (See Robertson Smith, *Relig. of the Semites*, Revd. Ed. pp. 187 ff.)

images] probably **sun-pillars**: R.V. "sun-images." The word (*hammānīm*, pl.) only occurs in ch. xxvii. 9; 2 Chr. xiv. 5, xxxiv. 4, 7; Ez. vi. 4, 6; Lev. xxvi. 30. It seems to be connected with Baal-Hammān, a Phœnician deity (best known from the Carthaginian inscriptions) whose name appears to designate him as "Lord of the sun's heat," (cf. the Hebrew *hammāh* used in poetry of the sun: Ps. xix. 6; Job xxx. 28; Cant. vi. 10; Is. xxiv. 23, xxx. 26). The "sun-pillars" were probably emblems of this deity.

9—11. Continued from v. 6. The rejection of Jehovah leads to failure and disappointment.

9. *his strong cities*] cf. v. 10,—the "Rock of thy strength."

As a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch,
Which they left because of the children of Israel :
And there shall be desolation.

10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation,
And hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength,
Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants,

as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch] Rather, if the text must be kept: "as the deserted places of the forest and the height" (so R.V.). For "forest" cf. 1 Sam. xxiii. 15, 19; 2 Chr. xxvii. 4; Ez. xxxi. 3 ("shroud"). "Height" is the word rendered "uppermost bough" in v. 6, which A.V. here follows. The construction in A.V. is altogether at fault, and the meaning "bough" cannot possibly be retained. But this is a case where the LXX. gives the clue to the true text, which reads **like the deserted places of the Amorite and the Hivvite** (see R.V. marg.). This alone gives an intelligible force to the next clause, and the textual change is comparatively slight save that the two words have been transposed ("Hivvite and Amorite").

which they left because of] More strictly, **which they forsook before**, &c. The passive "were forsaken" (R.V.) is only adopted because the previous clause contains no suitable subject; the LXX. rendering supplies this defect, and at the same time makes the reference clear.

10. *God of thy salvation*] The only occasion on which this important term (Heb. *yesh'a*) is used by Isaiah, although it forms an element of his own name.

rock of thy strength] A very frequent name of God, cf. ch. xxx. 29, xlv. 8 (R.V.); Deut. xxxii. (passim); Ps. xix. 14, xxvii. 5, xxxi. 2, 3, &c.

shalt thou plant pleasant plants] R.V. marg. gives **thou plantest plantings of Adonis**. The supposed reference is to the Adonis-gardens mentioned by Greek writers (see Plato, *Phaedrus* 276). They were "pots of quickly withering flowers which the ancients used to set at their doors or in the courts of temples." It cannot be denied that such an allusion furnishes the most striking image conceivable of the futility of all human projects which (like the Syro-Ephraimitish alliance) are not grounded in the eternal moral purpose of Jehovah. The question is whether it is a fair interpretation of the text. Now, there are a number of scattered proofs, slight but very interesting, that the Syrian deity known to the Greeks as Adonis, actually bore the name here rendered "pleasantness" (*Na'āmān*). It has been suggested, e.g. that the *anemone*, the flower sacred to Adonis, derives its name from this title of the god; and in Arabic the red anemone is called by a name which is explained to mean "wounds of Adonis." For other arguments see Cheyne's *Comm.* and the references there. Adonis being a Syrian deity, his worship in Israel was a necessary consequence of the alliance with Damascus. His worship was practised chiefly by women, Ez. viii. 14. The rendering may at least be accepted as giving significance to a metaphor which is otherwise somewhat colourless.

And shalt set it *with* strange slips:
 In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, 11
 And in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to
 flourish:
But the harvest *shall be* a heap in the day of grief
 and of desperate sorrow.

Woe to the multitude of many people, 12
Which make a noise like the noise of the seas;
 And to the rushing of nations,
That make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters.

set it with strange slips] or, *plant it with vine-branches of a strange (god)*; see Num. xiii. 23; Nah. ii. 2.

11. The verse reads: **In the day when thou plantest thou makest it to grow, and in the morning when thou sowest thou makest it to blossom, (but) the harvest disappears in a day of sickness and incurable sorrow.** "However successful your enterprise may seem in its early stages, it is doomed to failure." For "makest it to grow" we may render with R.V. "hedgest it in." The words "plant" and "seed" must be construed alike, both are taken above as infinitives. The word for "disappears" means "heap" in Ex. xv. 8; Ps. xxxiii. 7, lxxviii. 13 and so A.V. here. But here it is better taken as a verb; R.V. rightly "fleeth away."

CH. XVII. 12—14. THE SUDDEN ANNIHILATION OF THE ASSYRIANS.

These verses are regarded by some critics as the continuation of ch. xvii. 1—11, by others as the introduction to ch. xviii. Since the reference here is undoubtedly to the Assyrians, the first view has nothing to commend it, the transition being too sudden and abrupt. The second view, in spite of identity of subject and a certain similarity in form with ch. xviii., is also improbable because of the well-marked conclusion in v. 14 and the completeness of ch. xviii. in itself. It is better, therefore, to treat the passage as a short independent oracle springing from the same historical situation as the following chapter.

12. 'Isaiah on his "watch-tower" hears, and we seem to hear with him, the ocean-like roar of the advancing Assyrian hosts' (Cheyne). Whether the invaders are already in the land, or are present only to the imagination of the prophet, it is impossible to determine. The first half of the verse should be rendered: **Ah, the roar of many peoples, that roar like the roaring of seas.** The "many peoples" are the varied subject nationalities that furnished contingents to the Assyrian army. The comparison of such tumultuous masses of men to the noise of waters is frequent in the O.T.: cf. ch. v. 30, viii. 7; Jer. vi. 23, xlv. 7f.; Ps. lxxv. 7.

- 13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters :
But *God* shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off,
And shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains
before the wind,
And like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.
- 14 And behold at eveningtide trouble ;
And before the morning he *is* not.
This *is* the portion of them that spoil us,
And the lot of them that rob us.

— 13. The Assyrians shall perish at the rebuke of Jehovah. The first clause of the verse is almost identical with the last words of v. 12, and is wanting in the Peshito and a few Hebr. MSS. It may have arisen through dittography, although some think the repetition is rhetorically effective, contrasting the long-drawn-out terror of the invasion with the sharp and sudden visitation described in what follows.

but God shall rebuke them] Better: **but he** (Jehovah) **rebuketh it** (the tumult of nations). The following verbs should also be rendered as presents and in the singular number: **it fleeth...is chased**. The "rebuke" of Jehovah is His voice of thunder (Ps. civ. 7).

chaff of the mountains] Threshing-floors were chosen by preference on elevated situations, free to the wind, which carried away the stubble without any artificial winnowing process.

a rolling thing] R. V. **the whirling dust**, as in Ps. lxxxiii. 13. The translation "stubble," however, is supported by the analogy of Aramaic and Arabic words.

— For the figure, comp. ch. xxix. 5; Ps. i. 4, xxxv. 5, &c.

14. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be accomplished between evening and daybreak. The expression denotes a very short space of time, as in Ps. xxx. 5; Job xxvii. 19; but the destruction of Sennacherib's army took place literally in the night (ch. xxxvii. 36).

And behold...he is not] Render: **At eventime, behold terror! before morning, it** (the tumult) **is gone!**

them that spoil us, &c.] the Assyrians; cf. ch. x. 6, 13.

CH. XVIII. A PROPHETIC CHARGE TO THE ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADORS.

The theme of this striking prophecy is, like that of the preceding, the impending overthrow of the Assyrian power; its peculiar dramatic form is explained by the occasion which suggested it. This appears to have been the arrival in Jerusalem of an embassy from the Ethiopian monarch, probably Taharqa (Tirhakah), whose reign is supposed to have begun about the same time as that of Sennacherib (705). The object of the embassy must have been either to form an alliance with Hezekiah against Assyria, or to encourage him in resistance by renewed assurances of support. The only period at which such an incident is historically probable is that which preceded the final rupture between

Woe to the land shadowing with wings,

18

Judah and Assyria (c. 702). A date much earlier is inconsistent with ch. xx., where (in 711) Isaiah predicts an Assyrian conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia. On the other hand the tone of the prophecy seems to point to an early stage of the rebellion. There is no trace of the fierce indignation with which the *Egyptian* alliance is denounced in ch. xxviii. — xxxi.; the prophet does not seem as yet to have anticipated that the proposals of Tirhakah would be seriously entertained. Hence we may suppose that his reply to the envoys was intended as a guide to the policy of the king and his advisers. (See further General Introd., pp. xvi f.) In that reply Isaiah exhibits a fine combination of the character of the statesman with that of the man of faith, of the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*. While the language breathes the courtly urbanity and respect due to distinguished strangers from a far country, we can easily read between the lines a firm rejection of their overtures. Jehovah, he says in effect, will crush the Assyrian in His own time without human help; and that signal judgment will be a demonstration to Ethiopia and all the world of His supreme Godhead.

The prophecy contains two equal strophes and an epilogue:

i. vv. 1—3. The prophet's message to Ethiopia, prefaced by an imaginative description of the mysterious land and its inhabitants. The message itself is contained in v. 3, and is an invitation to all nations of the earth to be spectators of Jehovah's crowning act of retribution on Assyria.

ii. vv. 4—6. The divine revelation on which this assurance is based. For it is as an inspired prophet that Isaiah thus ventures to guide the policy of his country at this critical juncture. The meaning of the figure is that Assyria shall be cut down, just when its gigantic plans of conquest seem to be maturing under the most favourable conditions.

iii. v. 7. The epilogue, describing the effect of this display of Jehovah's power on Ethiopia. Other embassies, of a far different character, shall then come from the remote land to do homage to the name of Jehovah at Mount Zion.

1—3. The charge to the Ethiopian envoys, along with a poetic description of the land and people. The tendency of the ancient world to idealise the Ethiopians is familiar to students of classical literature. To the Greeks they were the "blameless Ethiopians" (Homer), "the tallest and handsomest of all men" (Herodotus). Isaiah would seem to have been struck by the fine physique of the ambassadors, and perhaps it was their narrative that furnished his vivid imagination with the picturesque details crowded into these three verses.

1. The word rendered *woe* is here neither a 'cry of pity' nor (as usually in Isaiah) of indignation. It is simply a particle of salutation (*heus*) as in ch. lv. 1; Zech. ii. 6, 7 (10, 11 Heb.). Render: **Ha, the land, &c.**

[the land shadowing with wings] a much disputed phrase. The most probable sense is that followed by R.V., **the land of the rustling of wings**. The Hebr. noun for "rustling" (*çêlāçāl* or *çilçal*) means a kind of "locust" (Deut. xxviii. 42), a "harpoon" (Job xli. 7, A.V. "fish-spears"),

Which *is* beyond the rivers of Ethiopia :

That sendeth ambassadors by the sea,

Even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, *saying*,

Go, ye swift messengers,

To a nation scattered and peeled,

To a people terrible from their beginning hitherto ;

and a very similar form means "cymbals" (Ps. cl. 5). The common root-idea is that of "clanging" or "jingling"; and if the above translation be correct the allusion is to the booming swarms of insects which abound in the Nile-lands. There may even be a special allusion to the dreaded Tsetse-fly, whose name among the Gallas (*çalçalja*) closely resembles the Hebr. word here used. The expression is to be understood literally, not metaphorically of armed hosts. Something might be said for the rendering of the LXX. and Targ. ("land of winged ships") if it did not anticipate v. 2. Others render, "land with the shadow on both sides" (*ἀμφοτερος*)—a supposed allusion to the fact that between the tropics the shadow falls sometimes on the north and sometimes on the south. But this seems very fanciful.

beyond the rivers of Ethiopia] The phrase is repeated in Zeph. iii. 10. Ethiopia (*Kush*) is used in the Bible somewhat vaguely of the region south of Syene (Assouan), at the first cataract of the Nile (Ezek. xxix. 10), corresponding generally to the modern Soudân ("land of the Blacks"). The empire of Tirhakah, which Isaiah has particularly in view, had its seat at Napata on the great westward bend of the Nile between Dongola and Berber. Hence it is not inappropriately described as lying "beyond" the rivers of Kush, i.e. the Nile itself and its numerous affluents (the Atbara, the Blue Nile, &c.).

2. The *ambassadors* are those who have arrived in Jerusalem. They had descended the Nile (here called *the sea*, as in ch. xix. 5; Nah. iii. 8) in *vessels of bulrushes* (R.V. **papyrus**). These light skiffs, constructed for one or two passengers, and capable of being carried where the river ceased to be navigable, are frequently mentioned by ancient writers (cf. Pliny XIII. 11 "ex ipso quidem papyro navigia texunt," and other authorities cited by Gesenius). Their great speed is referred to in Job ix. 26 ("ships of reed").

Go, ye swift messengers] Isaiah's charge to the ambassadors begins here; they are to return to their own country with this answer. (The "saying" of A.V. and R.V. is quite misleading.)

a nation scattered and peeled] Render as R.V.: **a nation tall and smooth** (lit. "drawn-out and polished"). The latter epithet probably denotes the bronze-like appearance of the skin of the Ethiopians; some, however, take it in the general sense of "beautiful" (*μέγιστοι καὶ κάλλιστοι*). The Nubians of the Soudân are still a remarkably tall and handsome race.

terrible from their beginning hitherto] Better: **dreaded near and far**. Lit., perhaps, "from where it is and onward," cf. 1 Sam. x. 3, xx. 22, 37. The temporal sense, however, is possible (1 Sam. xviii. 9), although less natural here.

A nation meted out and trodden down,
 Whose land the rivers have spoiled.
 All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the ³
 earth,
 See ye, when *he* lifteth up an ensign *on* the mountains;
 And when *he* bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.
 For so the LORD said unto me, 4
 I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling
 place
 Like a clear heat upon herbs,
And like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

meted out and trodden down] Render: **strong and victorious** (lit. "of strength and treading down"). The Hebr. for "strength" presents some difficulty. If read as pointed (*gav-qav*) it looks like a repetition of the word for "measuring-line" (*qav*); and this is the origin of the "meting out" of E.V. ("people of line-line"). But this sense has little probability; and the translation "strength" is warranted by the analogy of the cognate Arabic noun *quvva*. It is perhaps better to read it as a reduplicated form (*gavqav*), although the word occurs nowhere else. Note that R.V. rightly takes both nouns in an active sense.

have spoiled] The word is found only here and is of uncertain meaning. A more likely translation is "intersect" or (as R.V.) **divide**.

3. This verse gives the message which the ambassadors are to carry home to their countrymen, although it concerns all the world as much as the Ethiopians.

Render: **when a signal is lifted up...when a trumpet is blown**. Cf. ch. xiii. 2. Since the whole process is supernatural it is idle to enquire what the "signal" and "trumpet" signify. The verse is simply a summons to be prepared for the moment of Jehovah's decisive intervention.

4—6. The purpose of Jehovah, as disclosed to Isaiah by special revelation. The opening words point back to a definite time when this illumination came to him,—whether in a moment of ecstasy or not it is impossible to say.

4. *I will take...consider*] Better: **I will quietly look on**, the first verb being subordinate to the second.

like a clear heat upon herbs] Translate as R.V.: **like clear heat in** (or, along with) **sunshine**. The overpowering heat of the atmosphere in the height of summer seems something superadded to the effect of the sun's rays.

like a cloud of dew] The Hebr. word for "dew" means really a fine drizzling mist: what is meant is possibly the stationary *cirrus*-cloud in the upper air, which is called a 'mist-cloud,' in distinction from the rain-cloud near the earth (so Duhm).

Both expressions are rightly construed as comparisons. The temporal construction suggested by R.V. marg. ("when there is, &c.") is grammatically possible in the first case, but hardly in the second. The

- 5 For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect,
And the sour grape is ripening in the flower,
He shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks,
And take away *and* cut down the branches.
- 6 They shall be left together unto the fowls of the
mountains,
And to the beasts of the earth:
And the fowls shall summer upon them,
And all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon
them.
- 7 In that time shall the present be brought unto the
LORD of hosts
Of a people scattered and peeled,
And from a people terrible from their beginning
hitherto;
A nation meted out and trodden under foot,

points of comparison are apparently two: (1) the motionless stillness of the noon-tide heat and the fleecy cloud are an emblem of Jehovah's quiescence. (2) As these natural phenomena hasten the ripening of the fruit, so all providential agencies appear to further and mature the schemes of Assyria. But the development is suddenly arrested just before its fruition.

5. Assyria is here compared to a vine, ripening its grapes under the favourable influences indicated in v. 4. The word for *harvest* does not strictly denote "vintage" (see on ch. xvi. 9); either the more general term is employed for the particular, or the vine is conceived as cut down at that stage of its growth which coincides with the (wheat-)harvest.

Continue as in R.V., **when the blossom is over and the flower becometh a ripening grape, &c.**

take away and cut down] Rather (to avoid a *hysteron-proteron*) **hew away**, the first verb having merely adverbial force.

6. The figure is now abandoned; instead of the "sprigs and branches" of the vine, we have the dead bodies of the Assyrian soldiers left as carrion for unclean beasts and birds. *summer...winter*] a whole year. The idea is amplified, with somewhat gruesome details, in Ezek. xxxix. 11 ff.; cf. also Jer. vii. 33; 1 Sam. xvii. 46; 2 Sam. xxi. 10.

7. Ethiopia shall then pay homage to Jehovah at Mount Zion, the earthly seat of His sovereignty.

For *the present* read **a present**. The word is rare, occurring again only in Ps. lxxviii. 29, lxxvi. 11, in both passages coupled with the same poetic word as is here used for "brought."

of a people] Read **from** as in the next clause. The idea meant to be conveyed by the E.V. might be justified by an appeal to ch. xlv. 14, but it is far more likely that the preposition has been accidentally omitted in the Hebr. text.

Whose land the rivers have spoiled,
To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the
mount Zion.

the place of the name of the LORD] See 1 Ki. viii. 17; Deut. xii. 5, 11.
For other anticipations of the conversion of Ethiopia, cf. ch. xlv. 14;
Zeph. iii. 10; Ps. lxxviii. 31, lxxxvii. 4.

CH. XIX. AN ORACLE ON EGYPT.

It is recognised by all commentators that this difficult chapter consists of two dissimilar parts, although it is doubtful whether the second division commences with *v.* 16 or *v.* 18. For convenience, we may adopt the arrangement of Delitzsch, who regards *vv.* 16 f. as the connecting link between the two contrasted pictures of Egypt's future; the prospect of judgment in *vv.* 1—15 and the remoter prospect of conversion and prosperity in *vv.* 18—25. The prophecy may then be analysed as follows:—

i. *vv.* 1—15. The judgment on Egypt, conceived as executed by Jehovah in person, who, "riding on a swift cloud," suddenly makes His presence felt in the Nile-valley. In three equal strophes the prophet rapidly sketches the consequences of this visitation on the political, religious, and industrial condition of the country.

(1) *vv.* 1—4. The first effect is the collapse of the Egyptian religion, which is poetically represented by the trembling of the idols at the approach of the God of Israel (1). The foundation of the national self-confidence being thus dissolved there ensues a state of anarchy and civil war, aggravated by an utter absence of sound political guidance, which is vainly sought by the aid of sorcery and magical arts (2, 3). The issue of this state of things is the establishment of a cruel military despotism (4).

(2) *vv.* 5—10. A series of physical and social calamities is next described: the drying-up of the Nile (the source of all the material prosperity of Egypt), the failure of agriculture and the paralysis of the other industries for which the land was famous (fishing and weaving).

(3) *vv.* 11—15. The third strophe depicts the failure of the boasted traditional wisdom of Egypt (11—13), with the result that the infatuated nation reels like a drunkard under its accumulated misfortunes (14, 15).

ii. *vv.* 16, 17. The Egyptians recognise Jehovah as the author of their calamities, and so great is the moral impression produced that the mere mention of the land of Judah fills their hearts with craven terror. It might seem at first sight that these verses are the continuation of the previous strophe. But the change of style, from poetry to prose, leads us to expect a new departure. And in truth, as Delitzsch has pointed out, the abject fear here spoken of marks the beginning of their conversion to the worship of the true God. Hence the two verses form the natural transition to the description of that spiritual change, which follows in

iii. *vv.* 18—25. The passage consists of a succession of concrete

predictions indicating the marvellous change which is to take place in the religious attitude of Egypt and its relations to Israel.

(1) *v.* 18. Five Egyptian cities (one of which is named) shall adopt the "language of Canaan." (The exact significance of this perplexing verse must be reserved for discussion in the notes below.)

(2) *vv.* 19—22. The establishment of the worship of Jehovah in the land of Egypt will be symbolised by the erection of an altar in its midst and a pillar on its border; these are also tokens that Jehovah has taken the Egyptians under His protection (19, 20). By manifold experiences of chastisement and deliverance the knowledge of the true God shall be extended and deepened in Egypt, as it had been in Israel in the past (21, 22).

(3) *vv.* 23—25. A third symbol is a "highway" between Egypt and Assyria—a synonym for peaceful intercourse between Israel's powerful neighbours on the East and West (23). Both are admitted to a footing of equality with Israel in the new kingdom of God, and the three states form a 'Triple Alliance' which is a channel of blessing to mankind at large (24, 25).

The first section (*vv.* 1—15), which few critics have refused to recognise as Isaiah's, exhibits an intimate acquaintance with the internal affairs of the Egyptian Empire. But the historical allusions are too vague to enable us to assign a definite date to the prophecy, allowing, indeed, as Dillmann observes, a range of nearly 150 years. The most natural supposition is that Isaiah has in view an Assyrian conquest of Egypt, and that the oracle belongs to a time when delusive expectations of Egyptian support were entertained in Judah. On this assumption, we might find a suitable date for the prediction, (1) about 720, when Sargon defeated the king of Egypt at Raphia, or (2) in 711, when the similar announcement of *ch.* xx. was issued, or (3) about 702, when the Jewish politicians were eagerly courting an alliance with Egypt. Between these dates it seems impossible to make a final choice. In either case the "hard lord" of *v.* 4 would be the Assyrian conqueror, but it is not necessary to suppose that the prophet had any particular king in view. As a matter of fact the subjugation of Egypt was first effected by Esarhaddon in 672, and this would have to be regarded as the historical fulfilment of the prophecy. Some critics, however, abandoning the reference to an Assyrian invasion, have identified the "hard lord" with an Ethiopian sovereign (Pianchi, whose date appears to be much too early, or Tirhakah), others with a Persian conqueror (Cambyses, Xerxes, or even Artaxerxes Ochus), and others with a native despot (? Psammetichus, *c.* 645).

It is difficult to resist the impression that *vv.* 16—25 (whether written by Isaiah or not) form an appendix composed later than the rest of the chapter. The difference in form has already been referred to, and still more remarkable is the change of outlook and general tone. In particular, the promise of a "saviour" in *v.* 20, although not perhaps inconsistent with the threat of a "hard lord" *v.* 4, emphasises the contrast between the two sections in a manner which makes it little likely that the two were written together. Objections to Isaiah's authorship are based partly on the style and language, partly on the sympathetic

The burden of Egypt.

19

Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come *into* Egypt:

And the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, And the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.

And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: ²

And they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour;

City against city, *and* kingdom against kingdom.

And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; ³

tone of the references to Egypt (and Assyria), but chiefly on the circumstantial character of the predictions in 18—25. The cogency of the last argument depends greatly on the interpretation given to vv. 18, 19. If this be a specific reference to Jewish Colonies in Egypt and the Jewish Temple in Leontopolis (erected about 160 B.C.), it must be admitted that such minute descriptions of far distant events are not in accordance with Isaiah's ideal anticipations of the future. Hence the tendency of expositors who maintain the genuineness of the passage is to explain away the literal sense of the expressions, and to regard them as conveying a general prophecy of the diffusion of the true religion in Egypt. It may be doubted if the attempt is successful; and on the whole there appears to be a balance of probability in favour of the opinion that the appendix is post-exilic. If it be really the work of Isaiah himself, it is most intelligible in the evening of his life, when his mind was less occupied with current events, and more with the glorious future of the kingdom of God which lay on the horizon of his prophetic vision.

1—4. The dissolution of the Egyptian nationality by the judicial intervention of Jehovah.

1. On the superscription, see on ch. xiii. 1.

rideth upon a swift cloud] The same representation in Ps. xviii. 10, civ. 3. It is based on the ancient conception of the thunder-storm as the emblem of Jehovah's presence.

the idols] the "non-entities" as in ch. ii. 8, &c.

shall be moved at his presence] **shall quake** (ch. vi. 4, vii. 2) **before him**.

2. Jehovah speaks. The description of anarchy and civil war recalls ch. iii. 5, ix. 18 ff.

I will set... Egyptians] Lit. **I will stir up** (see ch. ix. 11) **Egypt against Egypt**—the general expression for civil discord which is explained in the remainder of the verse. *kingdom against kingdom*] LXX. *νομοὶ ἐπὶ νομῶν*—a correct translation drawn from the translator's local knowledge of Egypt. The numerous *nomes* or cantons were but loosely federated, and dissensions and local jealousies were always apt to break out when the central government was paralysed.

3. *the spirit of Egypt shall fail*] lit. **be poured out**, cf. Jer. xix. 7. "Spirit" is here used of intellectual power, as "heart" in v. 1 denotes courage.

And I will destroy the counsel thereof:
 And they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers,
 And to them that have familiar spirits, and to the
 wizards.

4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of
 a cruel lord;

And a fierce king shall rule over them,
 Saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

5 And the waters shall fail from the sea,
 And the river shall be wasted and dried up.

6 And they shall turn the rivers far away;
And the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried
 up:

I will destroy] or "swallow up," "annihilate," but see on ch. iii. 12. In their desperation the Egyptians betake themselves to incantations, a sign in Isaiah's view of hopeless intellectual embarrassment; ch. viii. 19. The word rendered *charmers* means "mutterers" (of magical spells). For the other expressions employed, see ch. viii. 19.

4. R.V. **And I will give over** (lit. "shut up") **the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel ("hard") lord** (in Hebr. plur. of majesty), &c. The words suggest a foreign ruler and are quite applicable to any Assyrian monarch likely to undertake the conquest of Egypt. Esarhaddon in 672 and again Asshurbanipal in 662 ravaged the country as far as Thebes; the Empire was broken up into twenty petty principalities, and all attempts at revolt were sternly suppressed until 645, when Psammetichus, one of the native princes, succeeded in shaking off the Assyrian yoke and uniting Egypt under his own sway.

the Lord, the LORD of hosts] here, as always, in confirmation of a threat. See on i. 24.

5—10. The material and industrial ruin of Egypt.

5. It has been supposed by some that there is a causal connexion between the judgments here threatened and the political calamities described in the first strophe. The loss of a stable and beneficent central administration in Egypt is immediately felt by the peasantry through the neglect of the vast system of artificial irrigation which is essential to the maintenance of the fertility of the soil. It is manifest, however, that the expressions here point to something far more serious than this, viz. a drying up of the Nile by the direct exercise of Jehovah's power. Cf. Ezek. xxx. 12 and Job xiv. 11 (where the latter part of this verse is reproduced).

the sea] Cf. xviii. 2. "Nili aqua mari similis est" (Pliny). At the time of the annual inundation the Nile has far more the appearance of an inland sea than of a stream; hence it is still called by the Arabs *El-bahr* (the sea).

6. The verse reads: **And the streams shall stink, the canals of Egypt shall become feeble and dry up**, &c. The word for "stink" is

The reeds and flags shall wither.

The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the
brooks,

And every thing sown by the brooks,

Shall wither, be driven away, and *be no more*.

The fishers also shall mourn,

And all they that cast angle into the brooks shall
lament,

And they that spread nets upon the waters shall
languish.

Moreover they that work in fine flax,

And they that weave networks, shall be confounded.

And they shall be broken *in* the purposes thereof,

All that make sluices *and* ponds for fish.

an anomalous form in Hebr. That rendered in A.V. "defence" is a rare name for Egypt (*Maçôr*, cf. Assy. *Mușur*, Arab. *Mișr*), found also in ch. xxxvii. 25; 2 Kings xix. 24; Mic. vii. 12. "Canals" (A.V. "brooks") is literally "Niles" (cf. vii. 18).

7. *The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks*] Usually rendered as in R.V., "The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile." The word for "meadows," which does not occur again, is supposed to mean literally "bare place," hardly a suitable designation! A safer translation would be, **Bare places are on the Nile, on the (very) brink of the Nile**. The LXX. has an entirely different text, which might suggest: "Bare is all verdure on the brink of the Nile."

every thing sown] A unique term. Perhaps "seed-field," but note the verb "driven away" which follows. "Seed-field of the Nile" might mean the alluvial deposit produced by the inundation, which is the source of Egypt's fertility.

8. Fishing, one of the staple industries of Egypt, is first mentioned, as that most immediately affected (cf. Ex. vii. 21). The two methods referred to, angling and net-fishing, are both depicted on the monuments.

that cast angle into the brooks] R.V. Nile.

9. Textile manufactures, linen and cotton, flourished greatly in ancient Egypt. *fine flax*] **combed flax** (R.V.). For *networks* read **white-stuffs**, probably cotton.

10. Translate as R.V. **And her pillars shall be broken in pieces, all they that work for hire shall be grieved in soul**. The expressions, however, are very obscure, and the sense is doubtful. The word for "pillars" is found in Ps. xi. 3 ("foundations"), but it is disputed whether the capitalists or the labourers are here regarded as the foundations of society. In the second clause A.V. follows Jewish authority in keeping up the reference to fishing (cf. "networks" in the previous verse), but its "sluices and ponds for fish" is altogether wrong. LXX. errs in the opposite direction by dragging in the liquor trade ("manufacturers of strong drink" [*shēkār*] instead of "workers for hire" [*seker*]).

- 11 Surely the princes of Zoan *are* fools,
The counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is
become brutish:
How say ye unto Pharaoh, I *am* the son of the wise,
The son of ancient kings?
- 12 Where *are* they? where *are* thy wise *men*?
And let them tell thee now,
And let them know what the LORD of hosts hath
purposed upon Egypt.
- 13 The princes of Zoan are become fools,
The princes of Noph are deceived;
They have also seduced Egypt, *even they that are* the
stay of the tribes thereof.
- 14 The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst
thereof:

11—15. The stultification of Pharaoh's advisers.

11. *Surely...fools*] Mere fools are the princes of Zoan. Zoan (Tanis, between the two most easterly mouths of the Nile), an ancient city (Num. xiii. 22), had played an important part in Egyptian history. Formerly the seat of the Hyksos kings, it had subsequently given its name to two native dynasties (21st and 23rd). Partly because of its proximity to Canaan it is frequently mentioned in the O.T. as representing Egypt. The next clause runs literally: **the wisest counsellors of Pharaoh—stupid counsel** (sc. is theirs)!

how say ye unto Pharaoh...] The wisdom of Egypt was the hereditary possession of the priestly caste to which the early dynasties belonged. The counsellors are here introduced boasting of the purity of their descent from these kings and sages of the olden time. Read (in both cases) **a son**.

12. The Pharaoh is now addressed in turn. **Where are they, pray, thy wise men?** In face of this problem they are nowhere; they cannot "know," far less "tell," the purpose of Jehovah towards Egypt.

13. *are become fools*] Better are befooled—"stultified." *Noph* is Memphis, the capital of Lower Egypt, and an ancient seat of Egyptian religion and learning. An older form of the Hebrew name is apparently *Moph* (Hos. ix. 6); both forms are perhaps contracted from *Mnoph* (hieroglyphic *Mennofer*). The city was situated in the southern corner of the Delta, near Cairo, which was largely built from its ruins.

even they that are *the stay of the tribes thereof*] Render: **the corner-stone of her tribes**, i.e. her ruling caste. For the metaphor, cf. Jud. xx. 2; 1 Sam. xiv. 38; Zech. x. 4. The "tribes" may be either the castes or the nomes (cantons).

14. Their intellectual confusion is caused by "a spirit" from Jehovah (but not personified as in 1 Kings xxii. 21 f.). *a perverse spirit*] Better **a spirit of perverseness** (R.V.). Cf. "spirit of deep slumber," ch. xxix. 10.

And they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof,

As a drunken *man* staggereth in his vomit.

Neither shall there be *any* work for Egypt, 15

Which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.

In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: 16

And it shall be afraid and fear

Because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts,

Which he shaketh over it.

And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, 17

Every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself,

Because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts,

Which he hath determined against it.

In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt 18

Speak the language of Canaan,

err...staggereth] The same verb should be used in both places—"wander" or "stray." The strong figure has a parallel in ch. xxviii.

7. Cf. Job xii. 25.

15. No concerted action is possible, and every proposal that is brought forward falls to the ground.

head and tail, palm-branch and rush, exactly as in ch. ix. 14.

16, 17. The terror of Jehovah on the Egyptians. There is an allusion to the effect of the plagues in the time of the Exodus. See Ex. x. 7, xi. 3, xii. 33, 36. Then, as in this prophecy, the people of God became an object of fear to their enemies, through the strokes of Jehovah's hand.

16. *like unto women*] timid and faint-hearted (Nah. iii. 13).

be afraid] Better, *tremble*, as R.V. *the shaking* (or "swinging") *of the hand...which he shaketh*] i.e. the repeated blows with which he smites them, cf. xxx. 32, x. 32, xi. 15.

17. By association of ideas the fear of Jehovah becomes fear of the land which is His dwelling-place. The verse is intelligible only in this connexion.

every one that maketh...himself] Either "every (Egyptian) to whom one mentions it, shall fear," or "whenever any one mentions it to him (Egypt) he shall fear."

the counsel of the LORD of hosts] see v. 11.

18. The verse may mean either (1) that an indefinite, but small, number of Egyptian cities shall be converted to the worship of Jehovah and adopt Hebrew as at least their sacred language; or (2) that at a certain epoch there shall be five (and no more) Jewish colonies in Egypt maintaining their national language and religion. On the former view

And swear to the LORD of hosts:

One shall be called, The city of destruction.

"five" is a round number (as in ch. xxx. 17; Gen. xliii. 34; Lev. xxvi. 8; 1 Sam. xvii. 40, xxi. 3; 2 Ki. vii. 13), and the verse is a prophecy of the first beginnings of the conversion of Egypt—a "day of small things." This interpretation, although grammatically defensible, is not natural. No parallel can be found in Isaiah's writings to the anticipation of a gradual dissemination of the true religion by sporadic conversions. He always treats the nations as units, and it is very questionable if the idea of a religious schism within the Egyptian nationality could have presented itself to him or his contemporaries as a desirable thing, or a realisation of the Messianic hope. If we adopt the second view the prophecy must have been written at a time when the prospect of Hebrew-speaking Jewish communes in Egypt was a natural expression of the anticipation that the influence of the Jewish religion would extend to that country. This was not the case at the very late date maintained by some critics (B.C. 160). By that time the Egyptian Jews had so completely abandoned their native tongue that a Greek translation of the Scriptures had become necessary for their use. This part of the prophecy is more intelligible at a considerably earlier period, before the universal solvent of the Greek language had begun to leaven the varied nationalities of the old world.—It is of course impossible to identify the "five cities." Hitzig has attempted it by the help of Jer. xlv. 1, adding to the three towns there mentioned, Heliopolis and Leontopolis (see below).

one shall be called, The city of destruction] The exegesis of this clause is complicated by a diversity of text. (α) The received text has *ʿir haḥeres*, which in Hebrew can only mean "the city of Destruction." The insurmountable objection to this reading is that it is inconsistent with the favourable general sense of the verse; for the translation "city of [the] destruction of idolatry, &c." is quite unwarranted. Some, however, explain the word by *ḥaris*, an Arabic epithet of the lion, rendering, "city of the Lion," i.e. Leontopolis, where the Jewish Temple was built. This might be intelligible as a *correction* of the reading to be next mentioned; hardly as an independent text. Moreover, the Greek translator of Isaiah knew nothing of it, but followed an entirely different reading (γ below). (β) Another reading, found in some Hebrew MSS. and followed by the Vulg., is *ʿir haḥeres*, "city of the Sun," i.e. Heliopolis. This gives a good sense. Heliopolis, the biblical *On* (Gen. xli. 50, &c.), might be especially mentioned because of its great importance in the religion of Egypt, as it is (under the name "house of the Sun") in Jer. xliii. 13. (γ) The LXX. reads "city of Righteousness" (*ʿir haḥsedeq*). This reading, in itself the least probable of the three, is defended by some commentators as most in accordance with Isaiah's use of names as descriptive of the essential quality of the objects (cf. i. 26, iv. 3, vii. 14, ix. 6). So here "city of righteousness" is regarded not as the proper name of any one city, but an epithet applicable to any of the five. On the whole, the suggestion of Cheyne seems as plausible as any, that the original form was *ḥeres*, and the reference was to Heliopolis;

In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in 19
the midst of the land of Egypt,
And a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.
And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the 20
LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt:

that this was altered by the Egyptian Jews to *cedeq* and by those of Palestine to *heres* (destruction), the motive in both cases being to establish a reference (in the first case favourable, in the second unfavourable) to the temple at Leontopolis. The latter variant, however, might be due to accident.

[The Jewish Temple in Egypt was erected about 160 with the sanction of Ptolemy Philometor and his consort by Onias IV., the legitimate heir of the high-priesthood at Jerusalem. (Josephus, *Ant.* XIII. 3, 1 f.; *Bell. Jud.* VII. 10, 2 f.) It was a brilliant conception on the part of the priest, but was probably not dictated by very lofty motives. Having been ousted from his rights by the intrigues of the apostate party in Judæa, he sought by this means to retain the state and emoluments of a great ecclesiastical dignitary. His enterprise cannot have been regarded with friendly eyes by the patriotic party in Jerusalem, and afterwards when the new Temple began to divert the stream of Jewish liberality from Jerusalem, their antipathy increased. The temple was built, after the model of that at Jerusalem, on the ruins of an Egyptian temple of the lion-headed goddess Bast (hence the name Leontopolis) in the Heliopolitan nome.]

19. It was to this verse, according to Josephus (and not to v. 18), that Onias appealed in support of the legitimacy of his project. The statement is perfectly intelligible; it had never occurred to any one to think of Leontopolis in connexion with v. 18; on the other hand, the promise of v. 19 was warrant enough.

an altar to the LORD] evidently intended for sacrificial offerings, not a mere memorial (see v. 21). The writer thus transcends the limits of the Mosaic legislation, which recognised but one altar of Jehovah. Some explain the prediction in a symbolical sense, of the spiritual worship of Jehovah maintained by the Jews and their proselytes. But this is hardly justifiable.

a pillar at the border thereof] The word *maṣṣēbā* usually denotes the sacred stones which stood by the idolatrous shrines of Canaan and whose destruction is enjoined in the Law (Deut. xvi. 22; Ex. xxiii. 24, &c.). From its use here it has been inferred that the prophecy dates from a time anterior to the promulgation of the Deuteronomic Code in the reign of Josiah. But it is doubtful if even in the age of Isaiah the *maṣṣēbā* in this sense could have had positive value as an adjunct of Jehovah's worship. The word is probably used in the general sense of a memorial pillar, and may have been suggested by the huge monoliths which were so characteristic of Egyptian civilisation. This one stands on the frontier of Egypt, as a sign to every one entering the country that Jehovah is known there.

20. *for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts*] i.e. a

- For they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors,
 And he shall send them a saviour, and a great one,
 and he shall deliver them.
- 21 And the LORD shall be known to Egypt,
 And the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day,
 And shall do sacrifice and oblation;
 Yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform *it*.
- 22 And the LORD shall smite Egypt: *he* shall smite and heal *it*:
 And they shall return *even* to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.
- 23 In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria,

reminder that He has a people in Egypt, and that by their presence the land is consecrated to Him.

The process of conversion in this and the following verses is finely conceived. First, the name of Jehovah is made known by the religious observances of the Jewish colonists and proselytes; then, in a time of trouble, the Egyptians turn to Him instead of to their false gods, and learn to know Him through His answer to their prayers (20, 21); finally this experience of Jehovah is deepened and purified by a discipline similar to that to which Israel was subjected in the time of the Judges (22).

the oppressors] Omit the art.; the reference is quite general.

a saviour] See Jud. iii. 9, 15; 2 Kings xiii. 5.

a great one] Better: **a champion**. A special allusion to Ptolemy Soter, or to the Jewish generals who served under Ptolemy Philometor is not called for.

21. *shall be known*] Rather: **shall make himself known**, as R.V. marg.

sacrifice and oblation] animal and vegetable offerings, see on i. 11, 13.

22. *he shall smite and heal it*] lit. "with a smiting and a healing," i.e. He will smite only in order to heal (Hos. vi. 1). *be intreated*] hear their supplications (*Niph. tolerativum*).

23—25. The incorporation of Egypt and Assyria in the kingdom of God. On the hypothesis that the prophecy is post-exilic "Assyria" will here denote the power to whom the reversion of the ancient Assyrian Empire had fallen. See on ch. xi. 11.

23. *a highway*] leading of course through Palestine. The ancient enmity between the two empires is laid aside in consequence of their common acceptance of the religion of Jehovah. **Egypt shall serve (Jehovah) with Assyria.**

And the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria,
And the Egyptians shall serve *with* the Assyrians.
In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and ²⁴
with Assyria,
Even a blessing in the midst of the land:
Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, ²⁵
Blessed *be* Egypt my people,
And Assyria the work of my hands,
And Israel mine inheritance.

24. *shall Israel be the third*—member of the Messianic League. For land read **earth** as R.V.

25. *whom the LORD of hosts shall bless*] R.V. for that the Lord of hosts hath blessed him (Israel). A better sense than either is given by the LXX. “(the earth;) which Jehovah...hath blessed.” But the masculine suffix is opposed to this.

my people and the work of my hands are titles elsewhere confined to Israel, but here accorded to Egypt and Assyria, the still dearer epithet *mine inheritance* being reserved for Israel,—as it were the ancestral estate of the one true God.

CH. XX. AN ASSYRIAN CONQUEST OF EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA PREDICTED.

The chapter is unique amongst Isaiah's discourses as giving the interpretation of a very remarkable symbolic action performed by the prophet at the command of Jehovah. For three years he went about in the garb of a beggar or captive, an object of astonishment and derision to the respectable inhabitants of Jerusalem. At the end of that time he published this explanation of his strange conduct. It was a public protest against the false hopes then entertained of a speedy deliverance from the Assyrian tyranny through the help of Egypt and Ethiopia (*v.* 6).

The date of the prophecy is assured. The expedition mentioned in *v.* 1 took place in 711, and is minutely related in two of Sargon's own inscriptions (see Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, Vol. II., pp. 89 ff. [Engl. Trans.]). At that time Ashdod was the focus of disaffection in Palestine towards the Assyrian government. Its king, Azuri, had withheld his tribute and joined with the princes of the neighbouring states (Judah included) in an appeal to Egypt for succour. For this he was deposed by Sargon, his brother Akhimit being set up in his place; but Akhimit was in turn removed by the Ashdodites, who chose one Yaman as their leader. Sargon then sent his commander-in-chief against Ashdod; the city was taken and plundered and its inhabitants led into captivity. Yaman had fled to the king of Meluhha, but was delivered up to the Assyrian king. Sargon's forces seem to have been too much occupied

- 20 In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against
 2 Ashdod, and took it; at the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying,
 Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins,
 And put off thy shoe from thy foot.
- 3 And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the LORD said,
 Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot
 Three years *for* a sign and wonder

elsewhere to allow the work of chastisement to be carried further, and so for the time Judah escaped the penalty of its meditated revolt.

The chapter is important as shewing that at this date Isaiah still looked forward to a great extension of the Assyrian conquests.

1, 2. A narrative introduction.

1. *Tartan*] In Assyrian *Turtanu*, the official title of the "chief of the staff." Cf. 2 Kings xviii. 17.

Sargon] (Assyr. Sarrukin) the only mention of this now familiar name in the O.T. For long it was supposed to be a second name of either Shalmaneser or Sennacherib (see Tobit i. 15), but the conjecture of a few scholars that he would prove to be an intermediate king has been amply verified by the progress of Assyriology; and Sargon is now one of the best known, as he was one of the most vigorous, of Assyrian monarchs. He reigned from 722—705.

2. This verse is an explanatory parenthesis. The command here mentioned must have been given three years before the oracle of vv. 3 ff.; hence the expression "at that time" must be understood in a loose sense and for *spake* we must render "had spoken."

sackcloth] the rough garment of hair or coarse linen worn by mourners in lieu of the customary upper garment; also by prophets (2 Ki. i. 8; Zech. xiii. 4). It is rather surprising to find that Isaiah wore this distinctive badge of his profession. He is directed to "ungird" (and lay aside) this and walk "naked," i.e. in his under-garment (the *kuttōneth*), cf. 1 Sam. xix. 24; John xxi. 7. The action was expressive of the deepest degradation, and involved no small sacrifice for a man of Isaiah's position. But that he actually performed it cannot reasonably be questioned. Cf. Mic. i. 8.

3, resuming v. 1, gives the interpretation of the symbol.

my servant Isaiah] Isaiah is Jehovah's "servant" as a prophet. Cf. Am. iii. 7; Num. xii. 7.

sign and wonder] see ch. viii. 18. By the accents the words "three years" are attached to this clause in order to convey the sense "a three-years' sign," meaning "a sign of an event which is to happen after three

Upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;
 So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians 4
 prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives,
 Young and old, naked and barefoot,
 Even with *their* buttocks uncovered,
 To the shame of Egypt.
 And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia 5
 their expectation,
 And of Egypt their glory.
 And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, 6
 Behold, such *is* our expectation,
 Whither we flee for help
 To be delivered from the king of Assyria:
 And how shall we escape?

years." But this is very unnatural, and was evidently suggested by a desire to avoid the notion that the action was kept up for so long a time.

upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia] Ethiopia was at this time the paramount influence in the Nile-valley, Upper Egypt being completely under its sway, while Lower Egypt was divided amongst a number of petty princes. The Sab'é, or Sib'i (?Sevé), whom Sargon defeated in 720 is usually identified with the Ethiopian Sabako. Winckler, however, doubts this, and takes Sab'é to have been one of the small kings of the Delta. (See also Cheyne's Note in 2nd Ed. of Robertson Smith's *Prophets of Israel*, p. 428.) "Upon" may be either **against** or **concerning**.

4. The apodoses. *lead away*] as in 1 Sam. xxx. 2.
the Egyptians prisoners...captives] Better as R.V. **the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Ethiopia**. The two words for exile are both abstracts used in a concrete sense; the corresponding verbs denote, the one the act of making captive, the other the act of going into exile (lit. leaving the land bare).

to the shame] The word means "nakedness," and the construction is difficult.

5, 6. The effect which the sight of these miserable gangs of captives will produce on the inhabitants of Palestine. This is the real motive of the prophecy. Hezekiah probably took the warning.

they shall be afraid] R.V. better: **dismayed**. The subject is indefinite—"men."

6. *this isle*] strictly: **this coastland** (as R.V.). The expression is most accurately descriptive of the Philistine country; but must include Judah. Isaiah did not go three years naked and barefoot for the sake of the Philistines. It no doubt embraces the territory of all the states concerned in the conspiracy—"this region."

expectation here and v. 5 is "object of expectation." *we* has a position of great emphasis in the original.

CH. XXI. ORACLES ON BABYLON, EDMO AND ARABIA.

These three short and difficult oracles form together one of the most singular passages in prophecy. Common to all three are (*a*) the obscure oracular utterance, in striking contrast to the terse lucidity of Isaiah's style, (*b*) the strongly-marked visionary element in the writer's experience, and (*c*) a certain readiness of sympathy with the foreign nations concerned in the predictions. These features indicate, if not identity of authorship, at least a peculiar type of prophetic inspiration, to which no complete parallel is found in the acknowledged writings of Isaiah. It is true that expressions characteristic of Isaiah occur in *vv.* 1—10, but they are hardly sufficient to remove the impression that the individuality of the writer is distinct from that of Isaiah. In the rest of the chapter the linguistic evidence is decidedly adverse to Isaiah's authorship.

THE ORACLE ON BABEL. *vv.* 1—10.

Like whirlwinds in the desert, the prophet has seen in a "hard vision" the stormy and impetuous advance of the Persian hosts against Babylon, *vv.* 1, 2.

Unnerved and appalled by what he has seen, his mind is filled with gloom and foreboding; the immediate prospect of carnage and destruction obscures for the moment the brighter hopes beyond, of deliverance for Israel, *vv.* 3, 4.

Another scene is briefly depicted; a Babylonian carousal within the walls, suddenly interrupted by the call to arms, *v.* 5.

The prophet then describes the mysterious inward process by which the truth had been communicated to him. In spirit he had stationed "the watchman" (his prophetic consciousness) to scan the horizon for some indication of the coming catastrophe. After long waiting "the watchman" descries the appointed sign—a train of riders—and forthwith proclaims its purport, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," &c., *vv.* 6—9.

The oracle closes with an apostrophe to the writer's own people announcing that what he has seen is the sure word of Jehovah, *v.* 10.

The question of authorship has to be settled mainly on historical grounds, and we have to consider in the first place, what conquest of Babylon is here referred to? (1) According to an attractive theory propounded by George Smith (the Assyriologist) and elaborated by Kleinert, the reference is to one of the sieges of Babylon which took place in Isaiah's lifetime, most probably that by Sargon in 710. The king of Babylon at that time was Merodach-baladan (see General Introd., p. xvi, and below on ch. xxxix.), whose friendly intercourse with Hezekiah is thought to account for Isaiah's interest in the struggle, as well as for the aversion with which he seems to contemplate the triumph of Assyria (*vv.* 3—5). (2) The majority of critics hold that the prophecy belongs to the last decade of the exile and relates to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 (see on ch. xiii. f.). This is certainly the more obvious theory, and the exegetical difficulties which have been

The burden of the desert of the sea.

As whirlwinds in the south pass through ;

So it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.

A grievous vision is declared unto me ;

The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth.

urged against it seem all to be capable of a satisfactory solution. The "tone of depression" manifested in vv. 3, 4 belongs to the subjectivity of the writer, and merely proves that he is distinct from the author of ch. xiii. f. ; it has no parallel in Isaiah's descriptions of the fate of Judah's allies. The mention of "Elam" and "Media" (v. 2) as the conquering foe is not incompatible with Isaiah's authorship (see xxii. 6), but is most naturally explained of the army of Cyrus. The impression that the author lived at a distance from Babylon is possibly correct (see on v. 1) ; but there may have been inspired seers in Palestine during the time of the Exile. On the other hand, v. 10 and the latter part of v. 2 seem clearly to imply that Babylon herself, and not her conqueror, is the cruel tyrant under whom the Jews and other nations are languishing.

1, 2. The "hard vision" of Babylon's fate.

1. *The burden of the desert of the sea*] Perhaps, **The oracle, "Desert of the Sea."** The first of a series of enigmatic headings, all but peculiar to this section of the book : xxi. 11, 13, xxii. 1 (cf. xxx. 6). In the majority of cases they are to be explained as catchwords, taken from the body of the oracle (in this instance the fourth word of the original, "desert"). Similarly David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is entitled the song of "the bow," 2 Sam. i. 18, cf. v. 22. The words "of the sea" are wanting in the LXX. Some render "deserts" (reading *midbarîm* for *midbar-yām*). Others, again, regard the fuller form as an emblematic designation of Babylon or Babylonia: the country that was once a sea (*θάλασσα* Herod. i. 184) and shall be so again.

in the south] Lit. "in the Negeb," the dry pastoral region in the south of Judah and beyond. The inference that the prophecy was written in Palestine is plausible, but not inevitable, since the word is used of the southern direction. For *pass through*, render **sweeping along**.

it (the undefined danger) *cometh from the desert*] probably the flat region S.E. of Babylon, between it and Elam. *a terrible land*] cf. xxx. 6; Deut. i. 19, viii. 15, &c.

2. *A grievous* (lit. "hard") *vision is declared unto me*]—by the "watchman," v. 6. "Hard" may mean either "calamitous" (1 Ki. xiv. 6) or "difficult," "hard of interpretation" (John vi. 60).

the treacherous dealer...spoileth] Cf. ch. xxiv. 16. It is difficult to decide whether this is a description of the besieging foe or of the conduct of the Babylonians towards their captives. The former view might be defended by xxxiii. 1 (assuming that the Assyrians are there alluded to) but it requires us to substitute for "treacherous dealer,"

- Go up, O Elam : besiege, O Media ;
 All the sighing thereof have I made to cease.
 3 Therefore are my loins filled *with* pain :
 Pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a
 woman that travaileth :
 I was bowed down at the hearing *of it* ;
 I was dismayed at the seeing *of it*.
 4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me :
 The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear
 unto me.
 5 Prepare the table, watch *in* the watchtower, eat, drink :
 Arise, ye princes, *and* anoint the shield.
 6 For thus hath the Lord said unto me,

“robber,” which is not the exact sense of the word. The other alternative is supported by the last clause of this verse (see below).

Elam...Media] The dominions of Cyrus. The former lay east of the Tigris and north of the Persian Gulf; Media was the mountainous district adjoining it on the north. Cyrus, according to the Babylonian records, was originally king of Anzan, in the north of Elam; in 549 he conquered Media, uniting the two in one kingdom. The name “Persia” never occurs in pre-exilic books.

all the sighing thereof] The misery produced by her (Babylon’s) ruthless oppressions. The verb shews that Jehovah is the speaker.

3, 4. The agitation and terror of the prophet.

3. *are my loins filled with pain*] Nah. ii. 10.

I was bowed down at the hearing...] or, as R.V. **I am pained so that I cannot hear**, &c. Similar metaphorical descriptions of mental anguish are frequent.

4. *My heart panted*] lit. **strayeth**; as we should say “my reason reels.” “Heart,” as often, is used of the intellect. *fearfulness*] R.V. **horror**.

the night of my pleasure] i.e. “my pleasant evening hours,” favourable for visionary communications and therefore dear to a prophet. (Job iv. 13).

hath he turned] Better: “is turned”; or “it (the vision) turns.”
fear] **trembling** (as R.V.).

5. The prophet contrasts his own lonely vigils with the careless security of the Babylonian revellers (cf. Dan. v.; Jer. li. 39; Is. xiv. 11).

Prepare the table, &c.] Render as in R.V. **They prepare the table, they set the watch** (the only measure of precaution adopted by the revellers), **they eat, they drink**.

arise, ye princes] The banquet breaks up in confusion, for the foe is at the gates.

anoint the shield] Shields were oiled (2 Sam. i. 21), probably to make the blows glide off them.

6—9. Hitherto the prophet has spoken of his vision as a thing

Go, set a watchman,
 Let him declare what he seeth.
 And he saw a chariot *with* a couple of horsemen, 7
 A chariot of asses, *and* a chariot of camels;
 And he hearkened diligently *with* much heed:
 And he cried, A lion: 8
 My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in
 the daytime,
 And I *am* set in my ward whole nights:
 And behold, here cometh a chariot of men, *with* a 9
 couple of horsemen.
 And he answered and said,
 Babylon is fallen, is fallen;

“announced” to him; now he proceeds to describe, in a very interesting passage, the method of its communication. The delineation is figurative, but seems in some sense to imply a dual consciousness of the writer. The watchman is the prophet himself in the ecstatic condition; he then sees and hears things beyond human ken. Meanwhile his ordinary waking consciousness is not suspended, but is ready to receive and transmit to the world the “watchman’s” report. The same figure is somewhat differently applied in Hab. ii. 1. For the expression, cf. Jer. vi. 17; Ez. iii. 17, xxxiii. 7.

6. *Go, set, &c.*] Render, **Go set the watchman, what he seeth he shall declare.**

7. The verse reads: **And if he see a troop, horsemen in pairs** (2 Ki. ix. 25), **a troop of asses, a troop of camels, then let him hearken, hearken hard.** This apparently is the expected sign that great events are on foot; when the riders are seen the watchman is to listen intently to discover who they are and what they are doing. The word for “troop” means always “chariot” (usually collective); here it must be used in the sense of “riding train” like the Arab. *rakb*. The procession represents the Persian army. “Asses” and “camels” are probably introduced as beasts of burden, although both animals are reported to have been used by the Persians in actual battle.

8. If the text be right, the first clause must read: **And he cried (like) a lion** (Rev. x. 3).

My lord] The A.V. seems here to assume that the prophet is addressed by his watchman. R.V. and most interpreters render “O Lord” (addressed to Jehovah). Nevertheless A.V. may be right,

although it requires the substitution of *’Ādônî* for *’Ādônāi*.
in my ward] i.e. “at my post.”

For *whole nights* read “all the nights.”

9. Hardly has he spoken when the appointed vision appears: **And, behold, here cometh a troop of men, horsemen in pairs** (see v. 7). And in the same breath the watchman declares its significance: **Babylon is fallen, &c.** (proph. perf.). Cf. Rev. xviii. 1 f.

And all the graven images of her gods he hath broken
unto the ground.

- 10 O my threshing, and the corn of my floor:
That which I have heard of the LORD of hosts, the
God of Israel,
Have I declared unto you.

- 11 The burden of Dumah.
He calleth to me out of Seir,
Watchman, what of the night?
Watchman, what of the night?

10. The application to Israel, addressed as **my threshing** (i.e. threshed one) and **my child of the threshing-floor**—forcible figurative epithets of Israel as a nation crushed and down-trodden by the brutal tyranny of Babylon (cf. ch. xli. 15; Mi. iv. 12 f.; Jer. li. 33, &c.).

THE ORACLE ON EDM. vv. 11, 12.

The prophet hears (whether in reality or in imagination it is impossible to say) an urgent cry from Seir, inquiring whether the night of distress is nearly over (v. 11). His reply (v. 12) is equivocal and confessedly incomplete; at a later time he may be able to read the signs of the times with a surer vision. The passage is too short and vague to permit any confident conclusion as to its date; but it contains nothing inconsistent with the supposition that it belongs generally to the same period as vv. 1—10. Towards the end of the Exile the Edomites seem to have been on friendly terms with the Babylonians, from whom they had received a considerable extension of territory (Ezek. xxxv. 10 ff., xxxvi. 5 ff.). But the supremacy of Babylon is now threatened by the victorious Cyrus, and Edom is naturally represented as anxious to learn how the unknown issue of the conflict will affect her national and commercial interests.

11. *The burden of Dumah*] The best known place of this name is the *Dûmat el-Jendel* ("rocky Dumah") of the Arabian geographers (mentioned in Gen. xxv. 14). It lay to the north of Tema (v. 14) and south-east of Seir. Jerome is the sole authority for the statement that there was a Dumah in the land of Seir. The word here, however, is probably a play on the name Edom (which is found in the LXX., and in the margin of some Hebr. MSS.), and at the same time an allusion to the mysterious character of the oracle (= "oracle of silence").

He calleth] Render as R. V. **One calleth**.

Watchman, what of the night?] "How far is the night spent: how long till the morning?" It has been suggested that the phrase may have been used in inquiring the time of night of the city watchmen. The word "watchman" here means "guardian" and differs from that employed in v. 6 (one who is on the look out).

The watchman said,
The morning cometh, and also the night :
If ye will inquire, inquire ye :
Return, come.

12

The burden upon Arabia.
In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge,
O ye travelling companies of Dedanim.

13

12. *The morning cometh, and also the night*] The watchman's answer is designedly obscure. It may mean either that the seer has obtained no clear vision of the destiny in store for Edom; or that he foresees a transient gleam of prosperity to be followed by a new night of distress; or that hope is dawning for some and gloom settling down on others.

if ye will inquire...] The answer is not final; another time the purpose of Jehovah may be more clearly indicated, if Edom earnestly desires to know it. For *return, come* render with R.V. marg. *come again*. It is impossible to suppose that "return" is used in the sense of "be converted to the worship of Jehovah." The words for "cometh," "inquire" (twice) and "come" are Aramaic.

THE ORACLE ON ARABIA. vv. 13—17.

A vision (vv. 13—15) and its interpretation (vv. 16, 17). A caravan of the merchant-tribe of Dedan is seen driven by stress of war from the regular route, and lurking in solitary places, destitute of food and water. The travellers are succoured by the hospitality of the neighbouring tribe of Tema (vv. 13—15). This vision symbolises a great destruction within a short time of the nomadic Arabs, purposed by Jehovah the God of Israel (16 f.). Here again positive indications of date are wanting. If the oracle belongs to the same group as the two which precede, the enemy would be the Persian conquerors of Babylonia, who are represented as attacking the Arabian caravans that traded under its auspices. A similar threat against Dedan forms part of a prophecy of Jeremiah against Edom in the time of Nebuchadnezzar (xlix. 7 f.).

13. *The burden upon Arabia*] The Oracle "**In Arabia**" (or, "**In the evening**"). The catchword of the heading is taken from the second word of the oracle. LXX. omits the title and in the text renders, with a different pointing, "in the evening," which gives a good sense (Ps. xxx. 5). The Massoretic reading may be translated "in Arabia" (Jer. xxv. 24) or "in the desert," although the word occurs nowhere else in this sense. *Forest* must here mean either "scrub" or (like the corresponding Arab. *wa'r*) "rough, stony ground."

travelling companies] **caravans**, as Gen. xxxvii. 25.

Dedanim] **Dedanites** (R.V.). Dedan (Gen. x. 7, xxv. 3) was an important trading tribe of Arabia (Ez. xxvii. 20, xxxviii. 13). Since it is mentioned in connexion with Edom (Jer. xlix. 8; Ez. xxv. 13), its

- 14 The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water
to him that was thirsty,
They prevented with their bread him that fled.
- 15 For they fled from the swords,
From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow,
And from the grievousness of war.
- 16 For thus hath the Lord said unto me,
Within a year, according to the years of a hireling,
And all the glory of Kedar shall fail:
- 17 And the residue of the number of archers,
The mighty *men* of the children of Kedar, shall be
diminished:
For the LORD God of Israel hath spoken *it*.

possessions were probably somewhere near the north end of the Gulf of Akaba.

14. The caravans are reduced to the direst straits through having to shun the stations on the regular route where alone their stock of food and water could be replenished. The prophet calls on the inhabitants of Tema to supply their necessities. The verse should be rendered: **To the thirsty bring water, O ye inhabitants of the land of Tema, meet the fugitive with bread (suitable) for him.** (See R.V. marg.)

Tema (Gen. xxv. 14; Job vi. 19) is the modern Teima in the northern highlands of Arabia, east of the great pilgrim route from Damascus to Mecca. In O.T. times it was the seat of an important commercial tribe, friendly therefore to the Dedanites.

15. The caravans have deserted the frequented paths, because of armed bands scouring the country.

16 f. The interpretation of the vision is regarded by many commentators as a later appendix similar to ch. xvi. 13 f. There is certainly a surprising resemblance between the two passages, which may suggest that they are both from the same hand.

16. *according to the years of a hireling*] See on xvi. 14.

Kedar] a tribe of pastoral nomads (Is. lx. 7; Ezek. xxvii. 21) in the Syrian desert (Jer. ii. 10), is here apparently a comprehensive designation of the north Arabian tribes (cf. Cant. i. 5; Ps. cxx. 5).

17. *the number of archers*] Lit. "of the bows." The bow was the chief weapon of the Northern Arabs, as of their progenitor Ishmael, Gen. xxi. 20.

CH. XXII. 1—14. THE INEXPIABLE SIN OF JERUSALEM.

The key to this passage—the most lurid and minatory of all Isaiah's prophecies—is the irreconcilable antagonism between the mood of the prophet and the state of public feeling around him. In a time of

universal mirth and festivity he alone is overwhelmed with grief and refuses to be comforted. In the rejoicings of the populace he reads the evidence of their hopeless impenitence and insensibility, and he concludes his discourse by expressing the conviction that at last they have sinned beyond the possibility of pardon. The circumstances recall our Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem on the day of His triumphal entry (Luke xix. 41 ff.).

It may be regarded as certain that the prophecy belongs to the period of Sennacherib's invasion (701), although it is difficult to select a moment when all the elements of the highly complex situation with which it deals might have been combined. There is just one incident that seems to meet the requirements of the case, viz., the raising of the blockade of Jerusalem, in consequence of Hezekiah's ignominious submission to the terms of Sennacherib (see General Introd., pp. xxxviii f.) It must be noted that this was not the last episode in that memorable campaign. The real crisis came a little later when the Assyrian king endeavoured by threats to extort the entire surrender of the capital. It was only at that juncture that Hezekiah unreservedly accepted the policy of implicit trust in Jehovah which Isaiah had all along urged on him; and it was then that the prophet stepped to the front with an absolute and unconditional assurance that Jerusalem should not be violated. That the earlier deliverance should have caused an outbreak of popular joy is intelligible enough; as it is also intelligible that Isaiah should have kept his eye fixed on the dangers yet ahead. The allusions to the recent blockade are amply accounted for, and the prophet's expectation of a terrible disaster yet in store is obviously based on his view of the continued and aggravated impenitence of his countrymen.

The following analysis of the prophecy is partly influenced by this reading of the historical setting, and it is right to say that at one or two points the view adopted is somewhat tentative.

i. vv. 1—4. While the city abandons itself to demonstrations of frantic gaiety, in spite of the disgrace that has overtaken the country, Isaiah shuts himself up in solitary and inconsolable anguish.

ii. vv. 5—7. He sees in vision a great day of calamity approaching, when the Assyrian shall again thunder at the gates of Jerusalem; and although the picture is not completed it leaves the impression that the city's day of doom has arrived.

iii. vv. 8—11. At this point (although the transition is extremely abrupt) the prophet seems to go back to the past, in order to trace the evidence of the people's unbelief. In the height of the danger they had paid minute attention to human measures of defence, but with never a thought of Him whose strange work then appealed so closely to their conscience.

iv. vv. 12—14. And this spirit of unbelief remains with them still. It has caused them to misread the providential lesson of their escape, and to find an occasion of thoughtless revelry and merriment in what was so obviously a call to serious reflection and penitence. For such a sin Isaiah has only a "fearful looking-for of judgment" to announce.

1—4. The joy of the people and the sorrow of the prophet.

- 22 The burden of the valley of vision.
 What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up
 to the housetops?
- 2 Thou *that art* full of stirs,
 A tumultuous city, a joyous city:
 Thy slain *men are* not slain with the sword,
 Nor dead in battle.
- 3 All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the
 archers:
 All that are found in thee are bound together, *which*
 have fled from far.
- 4 Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep
 bitterly,
 Labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of
 the daughter of my people.

1. *The burden of the valley of vision*] Or, **The Oracle "Valley of Vision."** The heading (prefixed by an editor) is taken from a phrase in v. 5 (see the note).

What aileth thee now] Better: **What meanest thou, I wonder** (cf. ch. iii. 15).

gone up to the housetops] cf. ch. xv. 3; Jud. xvi. 27; Neh. viii. 16. The flat roofs of the houses are thronged by excited citizens keeping holiday, perhaps watching some public spectacle. The prophet, wandering disconsolate through the streets, ironically inquires the reason of this unseasonable demonstration.

2. *full of stirs*] R.V. **full of shoutings.** *joyous city*] **jubilant city**, as ch. xxxii. 13. A festive disposition seems to have characterised the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Isaiah's time; cf. also ch. v. 14. That their gladness on this occasion was "the forced gaiety of despair" is indicated by nothing in the passage; it was due to the sense of relief from imminent peril.

thy slain...battle] Jerusalem's warriors have not met a glorious death on the battle-field, but have been taken prisoners and ignominiously executed (see v. 3). Some critics, however, take this clause and the next verse as the description of a vision which the prophet has of the future. On that view, which is plausible enough, it would be more natural to think of deaths from famine and pestilence (Lam. iv. 9).

3. *thy rulers*] **thy chieftains**,—the same word as in i. 10, there in its civil, here in its military sense.

they are bound by the archers] Better: **without bow** (which they had thrown away) **they were taken prisoners.**

all that are found in thee] **all of thine that were found.** *which have fled from far*] Rather as R.V. **they fled afar off.** The text of the verse is possibly in some disorder.

4. *Look away from me*] i.e. "leave me alone," as Job vii. 19.

For *it is* a day of trouble, and of treading down, and ⁵
of perplexity

By the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision,
Breaking down the walls, and of crying to the moun-
tains.

And Elam bare the quiver

With chariots of men *and* horsemen,

6

labour not is strictly **press not upon me**, and *spoiling* should be **destruction**. The prophet's gaze is already on the future.

daughter of my people] The phrase, common in Jeremiah and Lamentations, occurs only here in Isaiah.

5—7. The connexion here becomes very uncertain. It seems clear that v. 5 (from its form) must refer to the future, while vv. 8—11 undoubtedly go back to what is past. The transition must apparently take place either at v. 6 or v. 8. Now the tenses in vv. 6, 7 would be naturally construed as historic perfects, and at first sight it seems obvious that these verses are intimately connected with v. 8 ff., and belong like them to the past. But on the other hand it has to be considered that (a) v. 5 is too short to stand alone; (b) the preparations for the siege (8 ff.) are in any case distinct from (if not prior to) the assault described in 6 f.; and (c) there is no evidence of an attempt to carry Jerusalem by storm during the first blockade. Hence it seems better, in spite of the violence of the transition at v. 8, to regard vv. 5—7 as an account of what Isaiah has seen in vision, viz., the return of the enemy in force to the city.

5. The first half of the verse reads: **For a day of tumult and trampling and confusion hath Jehovah of hosts**,—"a series of inimitable assonances" (Cheyne) in the Hebr. (cf. Nah. ii. 10 [Heb. 11]). The form of the sentence is the same as in ii. 12.

The words *in the valley of vision* belong (in spite of the accents) to the second half; render: **in the valley of vision** (they are) **battering down the wall, and a cry** (of distress rises) **to the mountain**. "Valley of vision" is taken by some as a proper name (valley of Ḥizzāyôn), though no such place is known; by others as a mystic name for Jerusalem (like Ariel, xxix. 1), which is hardly possible, since the word for "valley" denotes a deep and narrow ravine. Some particular valley round Jerusalem must be meant, most probably the Tyropœon; but why it is called the "valley of (prophetic) vision" we cannot tell. The suggestion that Isaiah lived and had his visions there is very far-fetched.

6. *Elam* (see on xxi. 2) and *Kir* (not identified: 2 Ki. xvi. 9; Am. i. 5, ix. 7) are mentioned as furnishing auxiliaries to the Assyrian army. There is force in Cheyne's argument that some words may have fallen out before this verse, since it is difficult to understand the prominence given to these mercenary troops in the description of the siege. The "bow of Elam" is mentioned in Jer. xlix. 35.

with chariots of men and horsemen] a difficult expression. Perhaps "men on horseback among the chariots" (Dillm.).

And Kir uncovered the shield.

- 7 And it shall come to pass, *that* thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots,

And the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

- 8 And he discovered the covering of Judah,
And thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest.

- 9 Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many :

And ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.

- 10 And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem,
And the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

- 11 Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool :

uncovered the shield] Shields when not in use were protected by a leather covering (Cæs. de Bell. Gall. II. 21).

7. *And it shall come to pass*] strictly, **And it came to pass**, in the scene beheld by the prophet.

set themselves...gate] **take up their station towards the gate.**

8—11. The preparations for the siege. Cf. 2 Chron. xxxii. 2—5, 30; 2 Ki. xx. 20.

8. *he discovered the covering of Judah*] Probably “exposed the defencelessness of the state.” The subj. may be Jehovah or the enemy, or it may be indefinite. The clause is virtually the protasis to the following “And when the defencelessness of Judah was exposed, thou didst look, &c.”

the house of the forest] of Lebanon (1 Ki. vii. 2, x. 17). It was evidently used as an arsenal.

9. The first half reads **Ye saw** (i.e. examined) **the breaches of the city of David** (the citadel of Zion, 2 Sam. v. 7, 9) **for they were many.** Jerusalem was evidently quite unfit to stand a siege. The water supply was still defective, as it had been 34 years before (see ch. vii. 3). The *lower pool* is not elsewhere mentioned, although its existence is implied by ch. vii. 3. It was obviously within the walls, and probably lay near the mouth of the Tyropeon Valley.

10. *And ye have numbered the houses*] **And ye numbered**, apparently to see which could best be spared for the purpose specified in the next clause,—“to fortify the wall,” cf. Jer. xxxiii. 4.

11. For *ditch* read **reservoir** as R.V. The “old pool” is very probably the pool of Siloam (though this is not certain) and the “reservoir” would be intended to retain its surplus water.

between the two walls] a part of the city adjoining the royal gardens, where there was a gate (see 2 Ki. xxv. 4; Jer. xxxix. 4, lii. 7). The

But ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof,
Neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long
ago.

And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to ¹²
weeping, and to mourning,

And to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:

And behold joy and gladness, ¹³

Slaying oxen, and killing sheep,

Eating flesh, and drinking wine:

Let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall
die.

And it was revealed in mine ears *by* the LORD of ¹⁴
hosts,

locality is doubtless the entrance of the Tyropœon Valley, where the wall of the Western Hill and that of Zion (and Ophel) met at a sharp angle. The space so designated was of course outside the city; whether it was protected by a third wall crossing the valley we do not know.

but ye have not looked... **but ye looked not.** This clause carries us back to vv. 8, 9, where the same two verbs ("looked," "saw") are employed.

the Maker thereof] Better **him that did it.**

fashioned it long ago] lit. **formed it from afar.** The sin of the rulers of Jerusalem is that same indifference to the work of Jehovah with which the prophet had charged them many years before (see v. 12). To Isaiah, history is the evolution of a consistent, pre-determined plan of Jehovah, to the men of his day it was merely a confused struggle between opposing forces. Their failure to discern the hand of God in the events that had befallen them was the crowning proof of their spiritual insensibility; their ill-timed frivolity on this occasion seemed to the prophet to seal their fate.

12—14. The ignoring of Jehovah's presence in this crisis is an unpardonable sin.

12. *in that day did the Lord...call*] not only by the silent march of events, but also by the voice of His prophet: see ch. xxxii. 11. The call was to seriousness and humiliation, expressed by the customary signs of mourning. (Cf. Joel ii. 12; Am. viii. 10; Is. iii. 24, xx. 2, &c.)

13. Instead of this the people rush to drown reflection in riotous festivities. The immediate occasion of the revelry was no doubt a great sacrifice of thanksgiving to Jehovah for their unexpected deliverance, but this only rendered their irreligious spirit more detestable to Jehovah (cf. i. 10—17).

for to morrow we shall die] Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 32. Probably a current proverb. But the revellers may very well have been conscious that their escape had only procured for them a precarious respite. And in the next verse Isaiah assures them that they *shall* die.

14. *And it was revealed...hosts*] Render with R.V. **And Jehovah**

Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till
ye die,
Saith the Lord God of hosts.

15 Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go, get thee unto
this treasurer, *even* unto Shebna, which *is* over the house,
and say,

of hosts revealed himself in mine ears. The message comes to the prophet like an external voice, which he knows to be that of the Lord (cf. ch. v. 9).

Surely... The form is that of adjuration (cf. xiv. 24).
purged from you] Better; **expiated for you.** Cf. 1 Sam. iii. 14. The threat neither implies that the sin could be expiated by the death of the sinner, nor means merely that guilt would lie on them as long as they lived; it is a definite intimation that the unexpiated sin will call down punishment, and the punishment will be death.

CH. XXII. 15—25. A PHILIPPIC AGAINST AN INFLUENTIAL POLITICIAN.

Shebna, the minister here addressed, is supposed from his name and from Isaiah's indignation at his ambitious desire to have a magnificent sepulchre in Jerusalem, to have been a foreigner in the royal service. The office which he holds is the highest in the court, and is of course a measure of his influence with the king. That he was a partisan of the Egyptian alliance may be safely assumed, and it is likely that Isaiah had found in him the most astute and resolute opponent of the policy which he advocated. This opposition, together with hearty contempt for the character of the man, is the occasion of Isaiah's only invective against an individual. The prophecy is therefore probably contemporaneous with ch. xxviii.—xxx. Eliakim was probably the leader of the party favourable to Isaiah's views, and the substitution of the one minister for the other was equivalent to a radical change of policy on the part of Hezekiah. This change seems to have taken place before the crisis of the invasion, for in ch. xxxvi. 3, xxxvii. 2 we find Eliakim in possession of the dignity which Shebna here holds. But since the latter then occupied the lower office of secretary, we must conclude that some compromise had been arranged, and that Shebna's power was not altogether broken.

The passage contains three parts:

- i. The denunciation of Shebna, and the announcement of his deposition and banishment, *vv.* 15—19.
- ii. The installation of Eliakim, and the honour of his family, *vv.* 20—23.

iii. A very perplexing appendix, which seems to warn Eliakim against nepotism, and to anticipate the ruin of his house, *vv.* 24, 25.

15. *this treasurer*] Better: **this official.** The "this" is contemptuous. The word for "official" (*sôkēn*) is not elsewhere found. It

What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, 16
 That thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here,
 As he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high,
 And that graveth a habitation for himself in a rock?
 Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty 17
 captivity,
 And will surely cover thee.
 He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball 18

seems to mean either "associate" (like the "king's friend" of 2 Sam. xv. 37, xvi. 16; 1 Ki. iv. 5; 1 Chron. xxvii. 33), or "administrator" (the Assyrian *šaknu*).

which is over the house] (cf. 1 Ki. iv. 6, xviii. 3). This office has been compared to that of "mayor of the palace" under the Merovingian kings.

16. We may imagine the meeting between Isaiah and the vizier to have taken place at the sepulchre which the latter, after the Eastern fashion, was having prepared in his lifetime. By this act the *novus homo* asserted his equality with the aristocracy of Jerusalem, a piece of presumption which evidently kindles the ire of the prophet.

What hast thou (to do) here? and whom (as kindred or descendants) hast thou here?] i.e. "Thou neither hast the rights of a citizen, nor canst claim to be the founder of a family." Shebna's grave was simply the monument of his own vulgar and ostentatious vanity.

that thou hast hewed...here] (see below)—in so conspicuous a position. That Shebna actually placed his tomb amongst those of the kings and princes of Judah is not to be assumed; but he had plainly chosen a pretentious situation.

as he that heweth...] Render: **Hewing out his sepulchre on high! Graving in the rock an habitation for him!** Ejaculations of unutterable scorn. The use of the third person suggests that there were bystanders.

17, 18. The doom of Shebna is set forth in language of extraordinary force and passion.

17. *will carry thee away...captivity*] Translate: **will fling thee forth violently, O thou man.** The A.V. preserves the sense but entirely misses the bold metaphor, which is carried on to the middle of v. 18. The next words *and will surely cover thee*, when so rendered, hardly suit the context. The verb may be the equivalent of an Arabic verb, meaning "seize," which gives an appropriate idea, although it is the solitary instance in the O.T. Render accordingly: **and will seize thee firmly** (lit. "with a seizing").

18. The first half of the verse reads: **He will roll thee up in a bundle (and toss thee) like a ball into a spacious land** (lit. "a land broad on both sides," as Gen. xxxiv. 21; Jud. xviii. 10). The words "and toss thee" have to be supplied from the context; the construction is pregnant. The figure expresses banishment from Jehovah's territory, the "spacious land" referring probably to the Assyrian Empire.

- Into a large country :
 There shalt thou die,
 And there the chariots of thy glory
Shall be the shame of thy lord's house.
 19 And I will drive thee from thy station,
 And from thy state shall he pull thee down.
 20 And it shall come to pass in that day,
 That I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah :
 21 And I will clothe him with thy robe,
 And strengthen him *with* thy girdle,
 And I will commit thy government into his hand :
 And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
 And to the house of Judah.
 22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon
 his shoulder ;
 So he shall open, and none shall shut ;

there shalt thou die (cf. Am. vii. 17) *and there shall be thy splendid chariots, thou shame of thy lord's house*] To ride forth with "chariots and horses" was once regarded as a sign of aspiring to the highest dignity (2 Sam. xv. 1; 1 Ki. i. 5); later it seems to have been the privilege of the princely caste (Jer. xvii. 25), peculiarly offensive, therefore, in a foreign adventurer. The concentrated bitterness of the last words points to something worse than political differences as the cause of Isaiah's antipathy to Shebna.

19. The subject here is Jehovah; the change of person resembles that in x. 12. After v. 18, the verse reads like an anti-climax, but it is added to prepare for

20—23. The elevation of the head of the prophetic party at court.

20. Eliakim is called *my servant* as Isaiah is in ch. xx. 3.

21. *robe* ("tunic")...*girdle*] The palace officials seem to have worn distinctive liveries (1 Ki. x. 5); the uniform of the vizier was apparently a tunic and a girdle of special pattern. The word for "girdle" is used elsewhere only of the priestly girdle (see Ex. xxxix. 29, &c.). For *strengthen*, translate *gird*.

he shall be a father—a beneficent administrator, as Shebna had not been. How much in the East the welfare of the people depends on the character of the vizier is known from the legends of Haroun-al-Rashid. For the expression cf. Gen. xlv. 8; 1 Macc. xi. 32.

22. *the key of the house of David*] The symbol of unlimited authority over the royal household, carrying with it a similar influence in all affairs of state; like Pharaoh's signet-ring in the hands of Joseph, Gen. xli. 40—44. *upon his shoulder*] Cf. ix. 6; and with the whole verse comp. Rev. iii. 7.

And he shall shut, and none shall open.

And I will fasten him *as* a nail in a sure place; 23

And he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.

And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his 24
father's house,

The offspring and the issue,

All vessels of small quantity,

From the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of
flagons.

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, 25

Shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be
removed,

And be cut down, and fall;

And the burden that *was* upon it shall be cut off:

For the LORD hath spoken *it*.

23. *a nail*] usually a "tent-peg" (and so probably in a figurative sense, Zech. x. 4); but also (Ez. xv. 3) a peg on which household utensils are suspended. The latter idea (according to v. 25) must be intended here.

a glorious throne] Better: **a seat of honour.**

to his father's house]—all his nearest kindred, who are through him advanced from obscurity to great dignity.

24, 25. If v. 24 stood alone it might be barely possible to interpret it in a sense favourable to Eliakim. But taken in connexion with v. 25 it seems to convey an imputation of the unworthy exercise of patronage on his part,—a filling of important offices with worthless relatives and dependents. Many commentators, it is true, hold that v. 25 refers back to the fall of Shebna, but this is quite arbitrary. Shebna is *not* likened to a "nail in a sure place" and it is clearly implied that he had no "father's house" in Jerusalem (v. 16). It is hardly credible that Isaiah should have uttered such a threat along with the promises in vv. 20—23; but the last two verses may be an appendix written later, when abuses of trust in Eliakim's family had begun to display themselves.

24. An under-current of satire seems unmistakeable.

all the glory] perhaps: **the whole weight** (see "burden" in next verse).

the offspring and the issue] **the scions and the offshoots** (Cheyne).

The second expression is decidedly contemptuous, and so (more or less) are all that follow. It cannot be to Eliakim's credit that the bulk of his relations are likened to the meanest kitchen utensils.

25. The fall of Eliakim's house, described under the same metaphor. It is not necessarily implied that the minister himself lived to see this reverse of fortune; living or dead, his name was the "peg" of the family's nobility, and when the crash came, it might truly be said that the "peg fastened in a sure place" had been removed.

23 The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish;

CH. XXIII. AN ORACLE ON TYRE.

The unique position occupied by Tyre in the ancient world engaged the attention of more than one Hebrew prophet. Ezekiel, in one of the most original and elaborate of his foreign prophecies (ch. xxvi.—xxviii.), where he announces her impending overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar, shews the liveliest appreciation of the genius of that great commercial city, her unbounded enterprise, her devotion to material interests, and her self-deifying pride. Very similar in spirit is the simpler and shorter passage now before us, which, however, is not directed exclusively against Tyre, but embraces the older though less famous Zidon, and the whole Phœnician sea-board.

The chapter is clearly divided into two sections:—

i. *vv.* 1—14. A poem in three strophes on the destruction of the Phœnician cities and harbours, which is conceived as having already taken place.

(1) *vv.* 1—5. Ships of Tarshish, homeward bound, are dismayed on their arrival at Cyprus by the intelligence that the harbours of Phœnicia are closed to them (1); the once populous and thriving coastland lies desolate (2, 3); the sea is now a childless mother and forgets that she ever had offspring (4); Egypt is stricken with terror at the report of the fall of Tyre (5).

(2) *vv.* 6—9. The inhabitants of Phœnicia are ironically urged to leave the joyous cities which had been theirs from time immemorial, and seek refuge in their colonies beyond the sea (6, 7). For this is the purpose of Jehovah, to make an end of the regal power of Tyre, and cast contempt on all earthly greatness (8, 9).

(3) *vv.* 10—14. But Jehovah's power reaches over the sea, and not even in their own colonies can the exiled Phœnicians find rest for the sole of their foot. The distant Tarshish disowns their authority, the nearer Cyprus is also, for an unexplained reason, untenable. At the obscure *v.* 13 we lose the thread of the writer's thought, but in *v.* 14 the poem ends as it had begun with an apostrophe to the ships of Tarshish, whose haven is demolished.

ii. *vv.* 15—18 form an appendix written in a prose style (with the exception of the "harlot's song," a snatch of popular poetry, in *v.* 16). It announces the restoration of Tyre after the lapse of seventy years, but a restoration under entirely changed conditions, in which the gains of Tyre shall be consecrated to Jehovah and the use of His people.

There appear to be no valid reasons for refusing to ascribe the authorship of *vv.* 1—14 to Isaiah. The only serious difficulty is caused by the reference to "the land of the Chaldeans" in *v.* 13; but there the text is in all probability corrupt (see the notes). There are two occasions in the time of Isaiah to which the prophecy has been referred. The earlier is the campaign of Shalmaneser IV. (727—722) against Phœnicia, described at length in a fragment of Menander of Ephesus

For it is laid waste, so that *there is* no house, no entering in:

From the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

[Josephus, *Ant.* ix. 14, 2). Shalmaneser is said to have blockaded the insular part of Tyre for five years; but as his entire reign was only about five years, it is probable that the siege (like that of Samaria) was finished by Sargon. That the city was captured is nowhere stated, and the reticence of Sargon rather suggests that the siege issued in a capitulation. Phœnicia was again ravaged by Sennacherib in the expedition of 701, just before the invasion of Philistia and Judah, when the king of Zidon actually fled to Cyprus. Tyre is not mentioned in the Assyrian record of this campaign. Either of these invasions would furnish an adequate occasion for Isaiah's prophecy, though the second is perhaps less probable than the first. It may at least be said that the lyrical character of the passage is more intelligible when the prophet was a disinterested spectator of events in Phœnicia, than under the strain of excitement with which he faced the crisis of 701. It is true that Tyre did not then suffer the complete overthrow which is here contemplated; but it was nevertheless the first time that her existence had been seriously threatened, and the absence of a literal fulfilment affords no presumption against the genuineness of a prophecy.

The appendix (vv. 15—18) has been thought to bear the stamp of a later origin. The seventy years' duration of the humiliation of Tyre may be based on Jeremiah's (xxv. 11 f.) determination of the period of Chaldean supremacy, and the use to which the riches of Tyre are to be put (v. 18) is perhaps suggested by such late prophecies as Is. xlv. 14, lx. 11, lxi. 6. The case, therefore, appears to be closely parallel to that of the oracle on Egypt in ch. xix. In both we have a prophecy which is presumably Isaianic, followed by a supplement which there is reason to regard as post-exilic.

1. The returning ships are apprised, at the last stage of their voyage, of the disaster that has overtaken their mother-country. *Ships of Tarshish* may mean here, literally, "ships trading with Tarshish" (Tartessus) at the mouth of the Guadalquivir in Spain. See on ii. 16.

it is laid waste] The unexpressed subject is best left indefinite,—
"a destruction has been wrought."

no house, no entering in] i.e. "no house (harbour) to enter in." Cf. ch. xxiv. 10 "every house is shut up so that none can enter." The last word, however, might be joined with the following clause, which would then run: **since leaving the land of Chittim, &c.** The vessels learn of the fall of Tyre, not at Cyprus, but on their voyage thence. The *Chittim* are the inhabitants of Kition, in the south of Cyprus, rounded by the Phœnicians. The name was extended to the whole island, and ultimately in biblical usage to the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean (Dan. xi. 30).

it is revealed to them] whether by rumour from flying vessels, or by eye-sight as they approached the shore, does not appear.

- 2 Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle;
Thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over
the sea, have replenished.
- 3 And by great waters the seed of Sihor,
The harvest of the river, *is* her revenue;
And she is a mart of nations.
- 4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken,
Even the strength of the sea, saying,
I travail not, nor bring forth children,
Neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up
virgins.
- 5 As *at* the report concerning Egypt,

2. The prophet next apostrophises the *inhabitants of the coast* (render so, as in ch. xx. 6), i.e. Phœnicia, calling them to *be still*, or rather **dumb**, with bewilderment.

the merchants (in Heb. collective sing.) *of Zidon*] Zidon is generally interpreted throughout this prophecy as standing for Phœnicia as a whole. This is perhaps unnecessary, although it can easily be justified by usage (see Deut. iii. 9; Jud. iii. 3; 1 Ki. xi. 1, &c.). Zidon is said to have been the most ancient of the Phœnician settlements, and its merchants might naturally be spoken of as having founded the commercial prosperity of the country.

3. The easiest translation would be: **and on great waters the seed of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile, (was) her revenue, and it** (i.e. her revenue) **was the gain of the nations**. *Shihor* might be a name for the Nile, as in Jer. ii. 18; and the meaning would be that the revenue of Tyre (or Phœnicia) was derived from the sea-traffic in Egyptian grain. This was no doubt the case to some extent; but to suppose that the corn trade with Egypt was a principal source of wealth to Tyre is contrary to all the information we possess. The expression of the thought, moreover, is involved and enigmatic, and even if we call to our aid the subtle suggestion that Tyre, with no agriculture of her own, nevertheless reaped a rich harvest by her command of the sea, the idea is still unworthy of Isaiah, and of the rest of this poem.

The translation *mart* in E.V., instead of "gain" or "merchandise" is hardly justifiable.

4. *even the strength of the sea*] Better as R.V. **the stronghold of the sea**. The fine figure of the lonely sea denying that she ever had children is somewhat marred by the introduction of this clause, as if the poet had corrected himself by an afterthought, and changed the subject of personification from the sea to Tyre. One is tempted to remove the words as a gloss.

I travail not, nor bring forth, &c.] Render with R.V. **I have not travailed, nor brought forth, neither have I nourished young men, nor brought up** (cf. ch. i. 2) **virgins**.

5. The verse should be read as in R.V. **When the report cometh to**

So shall they be sorely pained *at* the report of Tyre.
Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the 6
isle.

Is this your joyous *city*, whose antiquity *is* of ancient 7
days?

Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning 8
city,

Whose merchants *are* princes, whose traffickers *are* the
honourable of the earth?

Egypt, they shall be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. Assyria being the common enemy of Egypt and Tyre, the report of the latter's fall is received with the utmost anxiety in Egypt.

6. The second strophe commences here with a summons to the Phœnicians to betake themselves to their Spanish colony for refuge, their own country being at the mercy of the invader. So the Tyrians, when attacked by Alexander the Great, sent all those unfit for war to Carthage, another western colony. Gesenius instances also the projected emigration of the Dutch merchants to Batavia in 1672 if the independence of Holland should be overthrown.

7. The reference is of course to Tyre, the principal subject of the prophecy.

whose antiquity...days] Next to Zidon, Tyre was regarded as the most ancient city of Phœnicia. Her priests claimed for their temple the fabulous antiquity of 2300 years in the time of Herodotus (II. 44); Josephus dates the city's foundation 240 years before the building of Solomon's Temple (*Ant.* VIII. 3, 1).

her own feet shall carry her...] **Render: whose feet used to carry her....** The reference is not to the future captivity or flight of the Tyrians (for which the expressions are unsuitable) but to the long journeys and residence in foreign parts of her enterprising merchants.

8, 9. This is the execution of Jehovah's purpose, and therefore irreversible.

the crowning city] Or, **the crown-giver.** Tyre is rightly so-called, inasmuch as some of her colonies (Kition, Tarshish and Carthage) were ruled by kings, subject to the mother-city.

whose traffickers] The word is probably the gentile noun "Canaanite" which is used with the sense of "trader" in Job xli. 6 [Heb. xl. 30]; Prov. xxxi. 24; Zech. xiv. 21, as the collective name "Canaan" is in older passages (Hos. xii. 7; Zeph. i. 11). It was of course from the commercial proclivities of the Phœnicians themselves that the word acquired this secondary significance amongst the Hebrews. The petty trade of Palestine seems to have been largely in the hands of Tyrian dealers (Neh. xiii. 16 ff.) and hence a Canaanite came to mean a merchant, just as a Chaldæan came to mean an astrologer and a Scotchman in some parts of England meant a pedlar.

- 9 The LORD of hosts hath purposed it,
 To stain the pride of all glory,
 And to bring into contempt all the honourable of the
 earth.
- 10 Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tar-
 shish:
There is no more strength.
- 11 He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the
 kingdoms:
 The LORD hath given a commandment against the
 merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.
- 12 And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice,
 O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon:

9. Jehovah has purposed it in accordance with a fixed principle of His government.

to stain (render *to desecrate*) *the pride of all glory*] The thought is the same as in ch. ii. 12 ff. For this use of the verb "desecrate," cf. Ez. xxviii. 7.

10—14. The third strophe, as usually explained, deals mainly with the emancipation of the Phœnician colonies from the somewhat stringent control of Tyre. But the passage presents many difficulties; and from the utter uncertainty as to the meaning of v. 13 the general sense is doubtful.

10. *as a river*] Rather: *as the Nile* (as R.V.). The people of Tarshish are now as free of the land they live in as the Nile is of Egypt in the time of the annual inundation.

there is no more strength] Render as in R.V. *there is no girdle* (about thee) *any more*. The "girdle" (cf. Ps. cix. 19) is supposed to be a symbol of the restraints hitherto imposed on the colonists by Tyre. But nowhere else is a man represented as hampered by his own girdle; the removal of it is rather a synonym for weakness (Job xii. 21—the same root as here—cf. Is. v. 27).

11. *He stretched out his hand, &c.*] R.V. *he hath stretched out... hath shaken*. Cf. ch. v. 25, xiv. 26, 27. The *kingdoms* are specially Phœnicia and its dependencies.

the merchant city] Read *Canaan* and see on v. 8. "Canaan" is the name used by the Phœnicians of themselves and their colonists, but this is the only example in the Old Test. of its restriction to Phœnicia.

12. *And he said*] What follows may be regarded as the "commandment" referred to in v. 11.

O thou oppressed (or *ravished*) *virgin, daughter of Zidon*] The epithet "virgin" is applied to Zidon as a fortress hitherto unviolated by a conqueror. It is an almost inevitable inference that the calamity here described is the first she has known, at least within living memory. This would apply to the campaign of Shalmaneser, but not to that of Sennacherib.

Arise, pass over *to* Chittim;
 There also shalt thou have no rest.
 Behold the land of the Chaldeans;
 This people was not,
Till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in
 the wilderness:
 They set up the towers thereof,
 They raised up the palaces thereof;
And he brought it to ruin.
 Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid ¹⁴
 waste.

And it shall come to pass in that day, ¹⁵

13. Every attempt to extract a meaning from the verse as it stands is beset by insuperable difficulties. Perhaps the best suggestion is that the fate of Chaldæa is mentioned as a warning example to Tyre: "Behold the land of the Chaldæans; this people is no more; the Assyrian hath appointed it for the beasts of the wilderness, &c." (so R. V.). This is a fairly good sense; only, "this people is no more" is hardly a possible rendering of the Hebrew. The reference is supposed to be to one (probably the last) of Sennacherib's three conquests of Babylonia, which were certainly carried out with a thoroughness which would justify the terms of the prophecy. But is there any evidence that Babylonia was known as the "land of the Chaldæans" before the rise of the Chaldæan Empire? There is none in the Bible.—The text is certainly in disorder, and there is little hope of recovering the original reading. Ewald's attractive emendation of "Canaanites" for "Chaldæans" fails to meet the case, for the exclamation "Behold the land of the Canaanites" surely comes too late after so much has been said of the ruin of this very land. The most acute analysis of the verse is that of Duhm, although, as is usual with this commentator, it involves an extensive manipulation of the text. To the original prophecy he assigns only the first and last clauses, and for "Chaldæans" he substitutes "Chittim": Behold the land of Chittim, he (Jehovah) hath made it a ruin"—a continuation of the thought of the preceding verse. The intermediate clauses are regarded as an interpolation and are ingeniously explained as follows: "this is the people that was founded by the sea-farers (cf. Num. xxiv. 24), they erected its watch-towers, its cities and its palaces." It seems a pity that so good a sentence should be denied to the prophet.

14. The poem closes as it began with an apostrophe to the ships of Tarshish.

your strength] **your strong-hold** (R. V. as in v. 4).

15—18. The appendix. Tyre shall be forgotten for seventy years; afterwards she shall resume her commercial activity, but its profits shall be dedicated to Jehovah's people.

- That Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years,
According to the days of one king:
After the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as a harlot.
- 16 Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten;
Make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.
- 17 And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years,
That the LORD will visit Tyre,
And she shall turn to her hire,
And shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world
Upon the face of the earth.
- 18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD:

15. *seventy years*] The period fixed by Jeremiah for the duration of the Exile and the dominion of the Chaldaean Empire (ch. xxv. 11 f., xxix. 10). The number occurs frequently in the later literature: Zech. i. 12, vii. 5; Dan. ix. 2 ff.; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. It is to be noted that in all these cases there is a reference more or less explicit to Jeremiah's prediction; and the use of the number here is probably to be accounted for in the same way. Ezekiel had used the number "forty" in a precisely similar manner (ch. iv. 6, xxix. 13).

according to the days of one king] The meaning is uncertain. Possibly it denotes a fixed, unalterable order of things, such as is maintained by the even rule of a single monarch. Some take it to mean "during the existence of one dynasty."

shall Tyre sing as a harlot] Rather: **it shall happen to Tyre according to the song of the harlot**,—evidently a well-known popular ballad, quoted in the next verse.

16. The song of the harlot, celebrating the wiles by which a forgotten prostitute seeks to regain her influence. The song has a light, dancing rhythm, and consists of six lines of two words each.

make sweet melody] Better: **play skilfully**.

17. The application of the song to Tyre. The comparison of commerce to prostitution is found in Rev. xviii. 3 and perhaps in Nah. iii. 4. Here it signalises the mercenary motive which was prominent in Tyre's dealings with other nations.

shall return to her hire] Shall resume her former lucrative activity. The last word is a technical term for the hire of a harlot.

18. *merchandise and hire* are synonymous; the one is the literal, the other the metaphorical designation of the same fact.

holiness to the LORD] i.e. "dedicated" to Jehovah (in opposition to

It shall not be treasured nor laid up;
 For her merchandise shall be for them that dwell
 before the LORD,
 To eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

the letter of Deut. xxiii. 18). The word has no ethical sense; and the idea of "commerce as the handmaid of religion," if by that it is meant that Tyre's commerce is to be conducted in a religious spirit, is foreign to the passage. Tyre is still a "harlot" as of old, and her conversion to the true God does not appear to be contemplated here.

shall not be treasured nor laid up] as formerly, for the benefit of Tyre herself. Those *that dwell before the LORD* are the Jewish people, who according to another prophecy (ch. lxi. 6) are the priests of humanity.

For *durable* read **stately**, as R.V. marg. The word is not found elsewhere.

CHAPTERS XXIV.—XXVII.

It is admitted on all hands that this interesting and difficult group of chapters, although without a heading, forms a distinct section of the book of Isaiah. They consist of a single connected prophecy, interspersed with lyrical and devotional passages, which appear in some instances to interrupt the sequence of thought. The general theme is one of the most familiar in prophecy; it is the "day of Jehovah" in its terrors, and with its blessed consequences for Israel and for humanity. But the treatment of that theme is in many respects unique in the prophetic literature. That the writer had a definite historical situation in view is abundantly manifest; but its features are designedly veiled by the use of mysterious and symbolical language, the precise significance of which frequently eludes our grasp. This is one characteristic of the class of writings known as apocalypses, and the strongly-marked apocalyptic character of the ideas and imagery has impressed nearly all commentators. There has perhaps been a tendency to exaggerate this feature; if we compare the passage with a typical apocalypse, like the book of Daniel, the differences are certainly more striking than the resemblances. In religious importance and depth the chapters are second to nothing in the prophets. Two great truths in particular, the universality of salvation and the hope of immortality, stand out with a clearness and boldness of conception nowhere surpassed in the Old Testament.

The critical questions which arise in connexion with these chapters are so intricate, and depend so much on the explanation of obscure allusions, that it will be convenient to economise space by postponing the consideration of them until the detailed exposition is finished.

CH. XXIV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT AND ITS PREMONITORY SIGNS.

The chapter is mainly an announcement of the last judgment, but partly also a gloomy survey of the actual state of the world. The writer

24 Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste,

feels that he is living in the last days, and in the universal wretchedness and confusions of the age he seems to discern the "beginning of sorrows." His thoughts glide almost imperceptibly from the one point of view to the other, now describing the distress and depression which exist, and now the more terrible visitation which is imminent. It is only at v. 21 that the transition is finally made to the absolute language of prophecy. The line of thought is as follows:

vv. 1—3. The prophecy opens with a "word" of Jehovah,—the announcement of an imminent and sweeping catastrophe affecting the whole earth, and involving all ranks and classes of society in a common destruction.

vv. 4—9. The earth is described as withering under a curse, because of the universal depravity and guilt of its inhabitants (4—6). Wine and music, the customary tokens of social enjoyment, have ceased; life has lost its zest; the world is profoundly unhappy (7—9).

vv. 10—12 depict the desolation and misery of an unnamed city, which, however, is but typical of the state of things everywhere.

v. 13. Resuming the language of prophecy, the writer foretells, under an image borrowed from Isaiah, the almost complete extermination of the race of men (cf. v. 6).

vv. 14—16. Here for a moment, "the vision of ruin is interrupted: borne from afar, over the western waters, the chorus of praise rising from the lips of the redeemed, falls upon the prophet's ear" (Driver). Yet, under the influence of his immediate surroundings, he feels that such rejoicing is premature; and the response of his heart is a cry of agony. For he knows that judgment has not yet had its perfect work; and accordingly, in

vv. 17—20, he returns to his main theme, accumulating images of destruction, in order to set forth the appalling magnitude of the catastrophe about to overwhelm the earth.

vv. 21—23. Here the prophecy reaches its climax in the announcement of Jehovah's appearance to vanquish the powers of evil in heaven and in the high places of the world, and to establish His everlasting throne in visible splendour on Mount Zion.

1—3 briefly announce the theme of the whole discourse, a final and universal judgment on the world.

1. *Behold, the LORD maketh...waste*] The construction in Heb. is the *fut. instans*,—"is about to empty." The metaphor of the verse (cf. Nah. ii. 10) is exceedingly expressive, the words being "those which were used for cleaning a dirty dish" (G. A. Smith). Cf. 2 Ki. xxi. 13. The language exhibits the fondness for assonance which is a marked peculiarity of the writer's style, far in excess of anything of the kind in Isaiah.

the earth] Not "the land" (R.V. marg.) of Judah or Palestine. "The prophecy leaps far beyond all particular or national conditions."

And turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

And it shall be, as *with* the people, so *with* the priest; ²

As *with* the servant, so *with* his master;

As *with* the maid, so *with* her mistress;

As *with* the buyer, so *with* the seller;

As *with* the lender, so *with* the borrower;

As *with* the taker of usury, so *with* the giver of usury to him.

The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: ³
For the LORD hath spoken this word.

The earth mourneth *and* fadeth away, ⁴

The world languisheth *and* fadeth away,

The haughty people of the earth do languish.

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; ⁵

Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance,

Broken the everlasting covenant.

2. The judgment affects all classes alike, without distinction of rank or fortune.

as with the people...priest] Cf. Hos. iv. 9. It would hardly be safe to infer from this proverbial expression that at the time of the author the priests formed the aristocracy of the Jewish people. *the*

buyer...the seller] Ez. vii. 12. *the taker...the giver of usury*]

Jer. xv. 10.

3. For *land* read *earth* as vv. 1, 4, &c.

4—6. The earth lies under a curse on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

4. *mourneth...languisheth...fadeth away*] Another instance of paronomasia in the original. Cf. ch. xxxiii. 9; Hos. iv. 3; Joel i. 10.

the haughty people] Lit. "the height of the people," i.e. **the noblest of the people**. It is the only case where the word is so used (though cf. Eccles. x. 6).

5. *The earth also is defiled* (literally, **profaned**) *under the inhabitants thereof*] That the land of Israel is profaned by the sins of its people, is a prominent idea in the O.T.; the conception is here extended to the whole earth. The condition of the world resembles that which preceded the Deluge (Gen. vi. 11).

changed the ordinance] Rather, **disregarded** (lit. "passed by") **the ordinance**.

the everlasting covenant] The expression is taken from Gen. ix. 16, and refers to the covenant made after the flood with Noah and his family as representatives of the human race. The sin of the world lies in the violation of these fundamental dictates of morality, especially the

- 6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth,
And they that dwell therein are desolate:
Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned,
And few men left.
- 7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth,
All the merryhearted do sigh.
- 8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that
rejoice endeth,
The joy of the harp ceaseth.
- 9 They shall not drink wine with a song;
Strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
- 10 The city of confusion is broken down:
Every house is shut up, that no *man may* come in.
- 11 *There is a crying for wine in the streets;*

law against murder, which is the principal stipulation of the Noachic covenant (Gen. ix. 5, 6). The conception is probably a late one.

6. *hath the* (or *a*) *curse devoured the earth*] Cf. Zech. v. 3.

are desolate] Render with R.V., *are found guilty*.

the inhabitants of the earth are burned] or *burn* under the curse, which is the expression of the Divine wrath. The verb (*hārar*) means "to glow" (Ez. xxiv. 11) or "be parched" (Job xxx. 30), not "be burned up."

few men left] Desolating and protracted wars have reduced the population of all countries; but the process of extermination is not yet at an end (see v. 13).

7—9. Joy has vanished from the earth.

7. Cf. Joel i. 10, 12.

8, 9. On the use of music at feasts, along with wine, see ch. v. 11, 12; Am. vi. 5. The verbs in v. 9 should be rendered in the present tense.

10—12. Even the "city," usually the scene of busy and joyous life, shares in the universal sadness. It is difficult to say whether a particular city is meant, or whether the word is used collectively for cities in general. The fulness of the picture gives the impression that the writer has a particular city before his mind, although it stands as a type of many others throughout the world. If this be so, it is most natural to refer the description to Jerusalem, where the prophecy seems to have been written.

10. *The city of confusion*] (or *of chaos*, Gen. i. 2) need not mean "the city destined to become a chaos," still less "the city of idolatry," which of course would be epithets inapplicable to Jerusalem. It may simply be equivalent to "the wasted city."

every house...come in] (cf. ch. xxiii. 1) i.e. the surviving inhabitants have barred their doors, suspicious of the intrusion of unbidden guests.

11. *a crying for wine*] Rather, as R.V.: *a crying because of the wine*. The word for *streets*, meaning strictly "that which is without," is by some rendered "fields"; but this is less natural.

All joy is darkened,
 The mirth of the land is gone.
 In the city is left desolation, 12
 And the gate is smitten *with* destruction.
 When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among 13
 the people,
There shall be as the shaking of an olive tree,
And as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.
 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing, 14
 For the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud
 from the sea.
 Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, 15

the mirth of the earth is gone] Lit. "gone into exile."

12. *In the city is left desolation]* after its mirth has gone into banishment.

13. The whole human race must perish, with the exception of an insignificant remnant. Render: **For so shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples as at the beating of an olive-tree, as the after-gleaning when the vintage is over.** The images are borrowed from ch. xvii. 6, and are used in the same sense.

14—16. Already, indeed, the prophet can hear songs of praise ascending from distant parts of the earth, hailing the dawn of a better day; but he himself cannot share these enthusiastic hopes. It is not likely that this representation is purely ideal. Events must have occurred which excited the premature expectation of an immediate deliverance. It is difficult to conceive the historical situation which is presupposed. The most natural supposition will be that the singers referred to are Israelites of the Dispersion, who follow with sympathetic interest the development of some great crisis in the fortunes of the people of God, but whose vision is unable to perceive the darker signs of the times which are manifest to the prophet. A more exact determination of the circumstances must depend on the date which is found best to harmonise all the indications of the prophecy.

14. *They shall lift up their voice]* Rather: **These lift up their voice.** The pronoun at the beginning is emphatic and stands in contrast to the "I" of v. 16.

they shall sing, for the majesty... Better (following the accents) **they shout: for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud, &c.** The last words *from the sea* (i.e. the Mediterranean) point to the West as the quarter whence the songs of triumph proceed. Cf. "in the coasts," v. 15.

15. The words are those of the hymn of praise from over the sea, as is shewn by the particle *Wherefore*, referring to the unexpressed cause of rejoicing.

in the fires] This gives no sense. R.V. has **in the east**; strictly "the (regions of) lights," which is the translation adopted by the majority of commentators. The idea would then be that the West calls

Even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

- 16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, *even* glory to the righteous.
But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!
The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously;
Yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.
- 17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare,
Are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.
- 18 And it shall come to pass, *that* he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit;
And he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare:
For the windows from on high are open,
And the foundations of the earth do shake.
- 19 The earth is utterly broken down,
The earth is clean dissolved,

on the East to join in the praise of Jehovah. But the form does not occur elsewhere and is not improbably written by mistake for "coasts," which is repeated in the next line in accordance with what is called 'the ascending rhythm.'

the LORD God of Israel] The singers, therefore, are in all probability Israelites.

in the isles] **in the coasts.**

16. Other voices *from the uttermost part* (strictly, "the skirt") of the earth are heard singing "*Glory to the righteous*," i.e. the righteous people, Israel. But these jubilant utterances of his more fortunately situated fellow-believers only extort from the prophet a cry of despair.

My leanness] Lit. "emaciation to me," hence R.V. "I pine away."
the treacherous dealers...] Cf. ch. xxi. 2, xxxiii. 1. Assonance is here carried to an extreme: "deceivers deceive, yea with deceit do deceivers deceive."

17—20. This description of the judgment on the earth and its inhabitants seems to connect immediately with v. 13.

17, 18 a recur almost verbatim in Jer. xlviii. 43 f. (cf. also Am. v. 19).

18 b—20 describe the physical convulsions which accompany the day of Jehovah.

the windows from on high are opened] An allusion to the story of the Deluge (Gen. vii. 11, viii. 2). The rest of the imagery is based on the phenomena of the earthquake.

19. *is clean dissolved*] Better, **is utterly shivered**. For *is moved* render **staggereth**.

The earth is moved exceedingly.

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,

And shall be removed like a cottage;

And the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it;

And it shall fall, and not rise again.

And it shall come to pass in that day,

*That the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones
that are on high,*

And the kings of the earth upon the earth.

And they shall be gathered together, *as* prisoners are
gathered in the pit,

And shall be shut up in the prison,

And after many days shall they be visited.

20. *reel to and fro like a drunkard*] Cf. Ps. cvii. 27.

shall be removed like a cottage] Better as in R.V. **shall be moved to and fro like a hut.** The word for "hut" is that used in ch. i. 8 of the watchman's frail shelter in the cucumber-field. It might here be fitly rendered "hammock."

the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it] The material fabric of the earth is as it were crushed beneath the accumulated guilt of its inhabitants (cf. v. 5, xxvi. 21).

it shall fall, and not rise again] Apparently a citation from Am. v. 2.

21—23. The judgment on the powers of evil, and the enthronement of Jehovah on Mount Zion.

21. *the host of the high ones that are on high*] Lit. **the host of the height in the height.** The "host of the height" is equivalent to the "host of heaven" (Jer. xxxiii. 22; 1 Kings xxii. 19; Neh. ix. 6); but (as these passages shew) the expression may be used either of the stars or of the angels. It is impossible to say which sense is intended here, or whether both are combined. That celestial beings of some kind are meant appears clearly from the emphatic contrast with the "kings of the earth" in the second half of the verse. The heavenly bodies, conceived by the ancients as animated, and as influencing the destinies of men, were objects of false worship, and so might be represented as part of the evil system of things which has to be overthrown. On the other hand the idea of patron angels of the various nationalities appears in the later literature (Dan. x. 13, 20, 21, xii. 1; Ecclus. xvii. 17) and these, as mysteriously related to the earthly sovereignties, might also be thought of. (On a similar conception in Ps. lviii., lxxxii., see Cheyne's Bampton Lectures, pp. 120, 337.)

22. *after many days shall they be visited*] See Jude 6, "reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day" (cf. 2 Pet. ii. 4); and the following passages from the book of Enoch (ch. xviii. 14, 16). "This...place...serves as a prison for the stars of heaven and the host of heaven...And he was wroth with them and bound them unto the time when their guilt should be complete in the

- 23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun
ashamed,
When the LORD of hosts shall reign
In mount Zion, and in Jerusalem,
And before his ancients gloriously.

year of the secret." (See also Enoch xxi. 6.) It is true that the verb "visited" may bear a favourable sense, and many commentators prefer that sense here. But this is opposed both to the tenor of the passage and the analogy of eschatological representations.

23. *the moon shall be confounded...ashamed*] i.e. shall "pale their ineffectual fires" before the light of Jehovah's presence (see ch. lx. 19). A *punishment* of the sun and moon, as representatives of the "host of heaven," is not to be thought of. The words "moon" and "sun" are poetic, signifying respectively "the white" and "the hot." (Cf. ch. xxx. 26.)

the LORD of hosts shall reign] Lit. "hath proclaimed Himself king." *before his ancients gloriously*] Render with R.V. marg. **before his ancients** (elders) **shall be glory**. There is an allusion to the Theophany seen by the seventy elders of Israel at Mount Sinai, recorded in Ex. xxiv. 9, 10. It is significant that the representatives of the redeemed community who stand nearest to Jehovah are not a king and princes, as in ch. xxxii. 1, nor priests, as in Ezekiel's Temple-vision, but a council of elders.

CH. XXV. SONGS AND PROPHECIES OF REDEMPTION.

The chapter is made up of three distinct sections:—

(1) vv. 1—5. A psalm of thanksgiving celebrating the downfall of some heathen city, and a signal deliverance extended to Israel.

(2) vv. 6—8. A prophecy of the Messianic dispensation, under the figure of a feast spread for all nations in Mount Zion. These verses are obviously the direct continuation of ch. xxiv.

(3) vv. 9—12. Another hymn of praise, composed in prospect of the extinction of Moab.

The occurrence of lyrical outbursts such as (1) and (3) constitutes one of the critical problems presented by this difficult prophecy. Two views are possible. (a) These passages (and others of a similar character) may belong to the original plan of the work, and may have been introduced by the author himself to mark the various stages in the great drama which unfolds itself before his prophetic vision. In this case we must suppose that he assumes an ideal stand-point in the future, from which he expresses the emotions of those who shall look back on the fulfilment of his predictions. Or, (b) they may be independent compositions which have been inserted in the text by an editor or scribe. (See the Concluding Note, p. 203.)

1—5. The writer of the psalm, speaking in the name of the believing community, praises God for His wonderful providence (v. 1) manifested

O LORD, thou *art* my God; 25
I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name;
For thou hast done wonderful things;
Thy counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth.
For thou hast made of a city a heap; 2
Of a defenced city a ruin:
A palace of strangers to be no city;
It shall never be built.
Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, 3
The city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.
For thou hast been a strength to the poor, 4
A strength to the needy in his distress,
A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,

in the overthrow of Israel's enemies (2, 3) and in the mercy vouchsafed to the nation in a time of trouble (4, 5).

1. The first half of the verse recalls in every phrase the language of the Psalter. Cf. Ps. lxiii. 1, cxlv. 1, cxxxviii. 2, liv. 6, cxviii. 28.

thou hast done wonderful things] as Ex. xv. 11; Ps. lxxvii. 14, lxxviii. 12. These "wonders" are the execution (in the recent experience of the nation) of *counsels of old*; i.e. purposes long since conceived and revealed. The last clause is perhaps to be translated: (even) **counsels from afar in faithfulness and fidelity.**

2. The fall of a hostile city. The word "city" can hardly in this case be understood collectively, although the terms of the description are too vague to shew what historic city is intended. All that appears is that it is a city which, in the age of the prophet, symbolised the hostility of the world to the kingdom of God; its identification will depend on the date assigned to the prophecy. If for instance the author lived during or shortly after the Exile, the "defenced city" would be most naturally identified with Babylon (see however on the next verse).

a palace of strangers] Better, **of aliens** (as in ch. i. 7).

3. The effect of this judgment on the heathen world. The probable rendering is, **Therefore (many) a strong people shall glorify Thee, (many) a city of terrible nations shall fear Thee.** If a single city were meant we should have a *second* representative centre of heathenism, alongside of the "city" of v. 2, and the view that Babylon is there referred to could no longer be maintained. It is easier, however, on account of the following plurals (in the Heb. "fear" is pl.), to understand the word here in a collective sense.

4, 5. Its happy consequences for Israel. The "for" may refer back to v. 1 or to v. 3; in either case the judgment on the oppressive city is regarded as a signal proof of Jehovah's protecting care over His people.

For *strength* render **stronghold**, as in R.V.

When the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a storm
against the wall.

- 5 Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers,
As the heat in a dry place;
Even the heat with the shadow of a cloud:
The branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.
- 6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make
unto all people
A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees,
Of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well
refined.

when the blast...wall] Lit., "for the blast of the terrible ones is as rain of a wall." The construction is too condensed to be natural. A better rendering would be "as rain of winter" (reading *qôr* for *qîr*). But the whole clause is justly suspected by some critics of being a gloss, on account of its prosaic character, and its doubtful appropriateness in the context.

5. Render: **As heat in a dry place** (cf. xxxii. 2) **Thou humblest the pride of aliens; (as) heat by the shadow of a cloud the song of the tyrants is brought low.** The meaning is that as natural heat, however intense, is abated by an intervening cloud, so Jehovah has means of bringing to an end the fiercest oppression to which His people can be exposed.

6—8. This section attaches itself directly to the concluding thought of ch. xxiv. The feast of v. 6 may be regarded as a coronation-festival, inaugurating the reign of Jehovah on Mount Zion (xxiv. 23), although of course the state of things which is thus symbolised is not transitory but eternal. What is signified is the admission of all nations to communion with the one true God, and, as a consequence of this, the cessation of all the evils of human life. The whole passage, standing out as it does from a gloomy background of judgment and terror, is one of the most remarkable and fascinating in the Old Testament.

6. *in this mountain*] Mount Zion (cf. xxiv. 23), shewing that the author lived in Jerusalem.

a feast (lit. "banquet") *of fat things...full of marrow*] The fat parts of the animal, which in ordinary sacrifice were reserved for the deity, were regarded in the East as the choicest delicacy. The same image is used in Ps. xxxvi. 8, lxiii. 5 of the highest spiritual enjoyment in fellowship with God.

wines on the lees well refined] i.e. wine that has been left to stand long on its sediment, in order that its strength, flavour, *bouquet*, &c., might be enhanced by repeated fermentation (cf. Jer. xlviii. 11; Zeph. i. 12). Such old wines had to be strained before being used; hence the expression "well-refined" in E.V. The choice of terms in the Hebr. is partly dictated by the assonances: *fat things* corresponding to *wines on the lees*, and *full of marrow* to *well refined*. For the image of the

And he will destroy in this mountain
The face of the covering cast over all people,
And the veil that is spread over all nations.
He will swallow up death in victory;
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all
faces;
And the rebuke of his people shall he take away from
off all the earth:

feast as an emblem of the blessings of the kingdom of God cf. ch. lv. 1, 2; Ps. xxiii. 5; Matt. viii. 11, xii. 2 ff.; Luke xiv. 15 ff.; Rev. xix. 9.

7. *the face of the covering...nations]* More literally: **the surface of the veil that veils all the peoples, and the covering that is woven over all the nations.** The phrase "surface of the veil" is peculiar, but a similar expression is found in Job xli. 13. It is probably to be explained as gen. of apposition—"the veil-surface." The veil is not, as might be supposed, a symbol of spiritual blindness (2 Cor. iii. 14 ff.), but of sorrow; the figure being taken from the practice of covering the head in token of mourning (see 2 Sam. xv. 30, xix. 4; Jer. xiv. 3, 4; Esth. vi. 12). The prophet has already spoken of the profound wretchedness in which the world is plunged (ch. xxiv. 7—12).

8. *He will swallow up...victory]* Rather: **He hath abolished death for ever.** Cf. 2 Tim. i. 10. The A.V. follows the rendering of St Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 54 (*κατέβη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος*), but "swallow up" is needlessly literal, and "in victory" comes from the apostle's familiarity with Aramaic. The sense, of course, is correctly given. The words contain the clearest expression of the hope of immortality to be found in the prophetic writings. The special contribution of prophecy to that doctrine is reached through the conception of the abolition of death as a hindrance to the perfect blessedness of the Messianic age. Although the prophets rarely touch on this theme, we can see that it was only by degrees and at a late period that the idea of immortal life became an element in their conception of the kingdom of God. The first step towards it was the anticipation of a great extension of human life, as in Zech. viii. 4; Is. lxx. 20, 22. From this to the belief in an absolute annihilation of death is no doubt a great advance, but the advance is made in the passage before us. It might be questioned if the resurrection of those who had fallen asleep before the advent of the Messianic kingdom is here contemplated; but since that doctrine is clearly taught in the next chapter (v. 19), the question has little importance.

and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears...—the traces of past sorrow. "When Jehovah removes the veil he sees the tears and wipes them away" (Duhm). Perhaps no words that ever were uttered have sunk deeper into the aching heart of humanity than this exquisite image of the Divine tenderness; cf. Rev. xxi. 4.

the rebuke (render, reproach) of his people...earth] a reversal of the doom pronounced in Deut. xxviii. 37. The later Jews keenly felt their

- For the LORD hath spoken *it*.
 9 And it shall be said in that day,
 Lo, this *is* our God;
 We have waited for him, and he will save us:
 This *is* the LORD; we have waited for him,
 We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.
 10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest,
 And Moab shall be trodden down under him,
Even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.
 11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of
 them,
 As he that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands* to
 swim:

accumulated national misfortunes as a religious disgrace, a reflection on the power of their God; Joel ii. 17; Ps. xlv. 14 ff., lxxix. 10, &c. Comp. with this passage, Zeph. iii. 18 ff.

9—12. The humiliation of Moab. The heading in v. 9 marks this as a distinct section. It might indeed be supposed, from the phrase "in this mountain" in v. 10, and the use of future tenses in 10—12, that the song of praise ends with v. 9 and that 10—12 are the continuation of v. 8. But this is unlikely. The express naming of Moab is not in the manner of the main apocalyptic prophecy, while to take Moab as a symbolic name for the enemies of God in general is hazardous, as being opposed to Old Testament usage. The violent contrast between the spirit of vv. 6—8 and that of vv. 10—12 rather favours the supposition that the latter was a separate composition. In any event, we must assume that so passionate an outburst of indignation against Moab was called forth by some special circumstance, although it is not possible to connect it with any known historic occasion.

9. *Lo, this is our God...save us*] Or, **Behold our God on whom we have hoped that he should save us.** So in the next clause: **on whom we have hoped.**

10. The fate of Moab is contrasted with that of Israel. It is as if one hand of Jehovah rested lightly and protectingly on Zion while the other crushes and extinguishes Moab.

under him] means "under himself," i.e. in the place where he (Moab) stands.

for the dunghill] R.V. **in the water of the dunghill** rightly follows the consonantal text in opposition to the Massoretic tradition. But it should have at the same time substituted "dung-pit" for "dunghill." This word (*madmēnāh*) is perhaps a play on the name Madmen (Jer. xlviii. 2); it also resembles the word for "straw" (*mathbēn*).

11. The figure of Moab trying to swim in the dung-pit is sufficiently graphic, if somewhat repulsive.

in the midst of them] should be (as in R.V.) **in the midst thereof**, i.e. of the dung-pit, although there is an *enallage generis*.

And he shall bring down their pride
Together with the spoils of their hands.

And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he ¹²
bring down,

Lay low, *and* bring to the ground, *even* to the dust.

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of ²⁶
Judah ;

We have a strong city ;

and he (Jehovah) shall bring down his pride] See on ch. xvi. 6.

together with the spoils of their hands] Perhaps: **in spite of the wiles**

of his hands. The expression is strange.

12. *the fortress...walls]* Better perhaps, **the towering fortification of thy walls.** This verse has suggested the identification of the city of xxv. 2, xxvi. 5 f. with a city of Moab. The expressions of the verse are certainly remarkably parallel to those of xxvi. 5, to which Duhm thinks that it was a marginal variant. Other commentators also have surmised that it is misplaced.

shall he bring down, &c.] R.V. more literally, **hath he brought down, &c.** The perfects, however, may be those of certainty.

CH. XXVI. 1—19. THE NATION'S PRAYER FOR A MORE COMPLETE SALVATION.

(1) *vv. 1—6.* The nation praises God for the strength and safety of Jerusalem, henceforth to be the dwelling place of a righteous, truth-keeping people (1, 2); for the steadfast faith which is now rewarded with peace (3, 4), and for the overthrow of a proud hostile city (5, 6).

(2) *vv. 7—10.* The enthusiasm of the opening verses here gives place to a more subdued and wistful mood. Israel still waits with ardent longing for the accomplishment of Jehovah's judgments (8, 9 a), knowing well that only by the discipline of judgment will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (9 b, 10).

(3) *vv. 11—15.* Meditation passes into prayer,—first for the destruction of enemies (11), then for peace to Israel (12 a); and this again into a retrospect of the past history of the nation, in which the writer thankfully recognises tokens of the Divine presence and help (12 b). Much has been achieved; foreign tyrants have been swept away (13, 14), the people has been increased and its territory extended (15).

(4) *vv. 16—18.* But the past has its failures also, and the effect of them is felt in the present. Israel has learned prayer through severe discipline (16); yet how vain and ineffectual have all its pain and effort been! (17, 18). And apparently the chief source of disappointment is the scantiness of the population that remains on the eve of the final glory.

(5) *v. 19.* The last verse comes on us almost with a shock of surprise, so far does it seem to exceed the aspiration to which it is the

Salvation will *God* appoint *for* walls and bulwarks.

2 Open ye the gates,

That the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace,

Whose mind is stayed on thee:

Because he trusteth in thee.

answer. It is a promise of life from the dead in the most literal sense, a resurrection of those members of the community whom death had seemed to rob of their share in the hope of Israel.

It is difficult to interpret the situation which gave rise to this deeply interesting meditation. The nation has emerged from a season of great trouble and oppression, and gratefully acknowledges the mercies it now enjoys, but this feeling is accompanied by confession of failure and an eager longing for a fuller experience of the Divine blessing. Such a state of mind is in itself perfectly intelligible; the difficulty is that it is hardly appropriate to the ideal future standpoint to which the psalm is assigned by the heading. "In that day"—the day of Jehovah's kingdom—the praises of Israel must surely rise higher than the sombre and almost melancholy strains that appear in the latter part of this poem. Yet it seems impossible to regard the passage as other than a unity. The verse-connexion is as a rule very close, and just at those points where some critics have recognised a discontinuity in the thought (e.g. after *v.* 7, or *v.* 10 or *v.* 16) the phraseology presents indications of a studied transition. The poem indeed is remarkable for its *concatenated* structure; that is to say, a word or idea is taken up from one verse and suggests a new thought for the next (*vv.* 2 f., 3 f., 7 f., 8 f., 9 f., 10 f., 17 f.). Partly from this peculiarity it is difficult to trace all the windings of the thought; and clearly defined sections do not exist.

1, 2. These verses might almost have been written for a dedication of the fortifications of Jerusalem. Cf. Ps. xlviii. 12 f.

1. *salvation will God appoint...bulwarks*] Two interpretations are possible: (a) "Salvation will He appoint in place of walls and moat" (see below), implying that Jerusalem has no material defences, but only the supernatural protection ("salvation") assured by Jehovah (as Ps. cxxv. 2; Zech. ii. 4, 5). (b) "He appoints for salvation (her) walls and moat" (as ch. lx. 18). The choice depends on whether Jerusalem is or is not conceived as a fortified city. Since "gates" are mentioned in the next verse, (b) seems more suitable. The word for *bulwarks* (a sing.) is usually understood to mean a low outer wall separated by some space from the wall proper (*τείχος καὶ πεπτεῖχος* in the LXX.); other authorities think it means a ditch or *glacis*.

2. Comp. Ps. cxviii. 19, 20; Rev. xxii. 14. "Truth" here means "troth," fidelity (Deut. xxxii. 20).

3. A stricter rendering might be: **A steadfast disposition thou guardest in constant peace** (lit. "peace, peace"), **for it is trustful towards thee** (see R.V. marg.). The word for "disposition" is else-

Trust ye in the LORD for ever: 4
For in the LORD JEHOVAH *is* everlasting strength:
For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; 5
The lofty city, he layeth it low;
He layeth it low, *even* to the ground;
He bringeth it *even* to the dust.
The foot shall tread it down, 6
Even the feet of the poor, *and* the steps of the needy.
The way of the just *is* uprightness: 7
Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.
Yea, *in* the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we 8
waited for thee;
The desire of *our* soul *is* to thy name, and to the
remembrance of thee.

where translated "imagination" (e.g. Gen. vi. 5, viii. 21). Literally it means a "thing formed" (as in ch. xxix. 16), and thus may be used tropically either of that which is formed by the mind (imagination) or (as here) of the constitution of the mind itself,—the inclination or character.

4. *for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength*] Render: **for Yah Yahveh** (see on xii. 2) **is an everlasting Rock** (lit. "a Rock of Ages"). The preposition *in* may be omitted in English (*Bêth essentialis*).

5, 6. Jehovah has proved himself to be a Rock by the destruction of "the lofty city"; see on ch. xxv. 2. The principal pause in v. 5 should be after the word "city."

6. The *poor* and *needy* are the Jews, as in ch. xxv. 4. The oppressed triumph over their oppressors. But that they are actually the instruments of Jehovah's vengeance on the "lofty city" is not necessarily implied.

7, 8. That the way of the righteous is made straight by Jehovah, is a fundamental principle of religion (Prov. iii. 6, xv. 19, &c.), but the principle is upheld only by Jehovah moving in His own way of judgment; therefore the "righteous nation" has waited impatiently for His judicial interposition.

7. The verse should probably be read: **The way of the righteous is straightness; the path of the righteous Thou directest straight.** The "way" of the righteous is here not his inward life-purpose, but his outward lot. *dost weigh*] lit. "levellest"; as in Prov. iv. 26, v. 6, 21 (R.V.).

8. *Yea, in the way...for thee*] i.e. have stood by the way along which we expected and desired Jehovah to appear—in judgment. The rest of the verse should be translated as in R.V., **to thy name and to thy memorial is the desire of [our] soul** (or, as Cheyne, "heart-felt desire"). "Name" and "memorial" are synonymous, as in Ex. iii. 15; Ps. cxxxv. 13; Jehovah's memorial is that by which He makes Himself to be remembered (see v. 13).

- 9 *With* my soul have I desired thee in the night;
 Yea, *with* my spirit within me will I seek thee early:
 For when thy judgments *are* in the earth,
 The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
- 10 Let favour be shewed to the wicked, *yet* will he not
 learn righteousness:
 In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly,
 And will not behold the majesty of the LORD.
- 11 LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see:
But they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at
 the people;
 Yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.
- 12 LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us:
 For thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

9. The first half of the verse completes the thought of v. 8; the second is linked to v. 10. The speaker is the individualised community. *will I seek thee early*] Rather, **I seek thee earnestly.**

9b, 10. The motive of this eager longing for judgment is the conviction that only by this method can the world be brought to the practice of righteousness.

10. *the wicked* probably includes both the heathen and the apostate Israelite.

the land of uprightness is the Holy Land; even there, surrounded by the institutions of a pure religion, the wicked outrages the dictates of morality, having no eyes for the majesty of Jehovah.

11. To the eye of faith the lifting up of Jehovah's hand has been manifest in the recent history of Israel, but, as in Isaiah's time, there are some who "regard not the work of Jehovah nor see the operation of his hands" (ch. v. 12); and for them further judgments are necessary. The first part of the verse is a categorical statement: **Jehovah, thy hand hath been lifted up, [yet] they see not.**

but they shall see...people] Lit., **Let them see (and be ashamed) [thy] jealousy for the people**; i.e. "let them be put to shame when they see, &c." The clause "and be ashamed" is a parenthesis, separating the verb from its object. "Jealousy for the people" is gen. of the obj., as Ps. lxxix. 9. For the idea cf. Zeph. i. 18; Ez. xxxvi. 5. Similarly, *the fire of thine enemies* means "the fire (reserved) for thine enemies."

12. *thou wilt ordain*] or "mayest thou ordain." *peace for us*] cf. v. 3.

for thou also hast wrought...] Better: **for even our whole work thou hast wrought for us**; all that we have achieved—inadequate though it be (see v. 17)—has been due to thy working for us. A similar thought underlies the prayer of Ps. xc. 16, 17, where the manifestation of Jehovah's work is equivalent to His establishing the work of Israel's hands.

O LORD our God,
Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us :
But by thee only will we make mention of thy name.
They are dead, they shall not live ;
They are deceased, they shall not rise :
Therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them,
And made all their memory to perish.
Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD,
Thou hast increased the nation : thou art glorified :
Thou hadst removed *it* far *unto* all the ends of the
earth.

13, 14. The long heathen domination is now a thing of the past ; the oppressors have gone to the realm of shades, and shall trouble the world no more.

13. *other lords besides thee*] That the reference is to foreign despotisms, and not as some have thought to false gods, may be regarded as certain. The rule of the heathen over the people of God was an invasion of Jehovah's sovereignty, it was inconsistent with the ideal of the Theocracy, and hindered the perfect realisation of the Divine will in the national life.

by thee only...name] The sense appears to be: "it is through thy help alone that we can now celebrate thy name." The construction is not very clear.

14. Render: **The dead shall not live, the Shades** (*Rēphā'īm*, as in xiv. 9) **shall not rise**, &c. In the form of a general proposition the writer expresses Israel's sense of security with regard to those "other lords" who have now vanished from the earth. The idea is probably suggested by ch. xiv. 9ff. There is no contradiction between this verse and v. 19, nor is there any evidence of a merely nascent belief in the possibility of a resurrection; because the subjects in the two verses are different. The resurrection of v. 19 is distinctly represented as miraculous, and is limited to members of the covenant people; over those who are unvisited by the life-giving "dew" of Jehovah, the sway of death is absolute.

therefore...] i.e. in token that they shall never reappear, all traces of their supremacy have been obliterated.

all their memory] **every memorial of them.**

15. *Thou hast increased the nation*] Probably an allusion to ch. ix. 3. There is no justification for taking the perfects here as prophetic perfects, or for understanding them in a precativ sense. A real increase of the nation and its territory is regarded as already effected; this is one of the successes which Jehovah has wrought for His people.

thou art glorified] **thou hast glorified thyself**,—by thus exalting Israel.

thou hadst removed...earth] Render with R.V., **thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land.**

- 16 LORD, in trouble have they visited thee,
They poured out a prayer *when* thy chastening *was*
upon them.
- 17 Like as a woman with child, *that* draweth near the
time of her delivery,
Is in pain, *and* crieth out in her pangs;
So have we been in thy sight, O LORD.
- 18 We have been with child, we have been in pain,
We have as it were brought forth wind;

16—18. The poet plunges abruptly into a train of reflection on the depressing side of the nation's experience.

16. *in trouble* ("distress" or "straits," as ch. xxv. 4) *have they visited thee*] i.e. sought after thee. The verb might also mean "missed thee"—felt their need of thee. This was no doubt a spiritual gain, but the author's complaint is that so little outward benefit has accrued from the nation's discipline of sorrow.

they poured out...upon them] A difficult clause. The rendering of A.V. (and R.V.) is perhaps the best that can be made of the received text, but it can hardly be defended. The root-meaning of the word for "prayer" is "whisper," but in usage it is confined to the sense of "enchantment." It is questionable if it could mean "whispered prayer," although the cognate verb in 2 Sam. xii. 19 and Ps. xli. 7 might be appealed to in support of this view. Moreover, the verbal form "they poured out" is anomalous, and the syntax of "when thy chastisement was upon them" is at least hard. The only alternative translation that requires notice is that of Koppe (adopted by several good commentators): "the binding of a spell was thy chastisement unto them," i.e. it acted on them with the potency of a spell. The construction there is easy enough and the textual change is only in the vowel-points; but the noun "binding" ("pressure") does not occur, and the simile is perhaps too bold.

17. The agony of the crisis is compared to the pangs of a woman in travail,—a common figure, Hos. xiii. 13; Mic. iv. 10, &c.

in thy sight] Or, **because of thee**—Thy chastening hand.

18. Retaining the figure the prophet dwells on the abortive issue of the nation's prayers and sufferings. In the last clause he seems even to give the figure a closer application. For that sentence is no doubt to be read as in R.V. marg., **neither have inhabitants of the world been born**; i.e. the mother-nation has brought forth no children to people the world. This sense of the verb "fall" is not found elsewhere in Hebr., but it occurs in Arabic (cf. also the Greek *πιπτειν* and Latin *cadere*); and here it is demanded by the last clause of v. 19. The complaint (of an insufficient population) seems at first inconsistent with v. 15, but the discrepancy belongs to the conflict of feeling which runs through the poem; a certain degree of prosperity has been attained, but not complete and final salvation. It is certainly difficult to imagine such a complaint projected on the ideal horizon of the future. A disappoint-

We have not wrought any deliverance *in* the earth;
Neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

Thy dead *men* shall live,
Together with my dead body shall they arise.
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:
For thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs,
And the earth shall cast out the dead.

19

ment so peculiar must be begotten of actual experience. Comp. ch. lxvi. 7—9.

we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth] Lit. "we do not make the land salvations"; i.e. we cannot with all our exertions bring about a condition of freedom, prosperity, peace, &c.

19. The answer to these utterances of disappointed hopes is the promise of the Resurrection. The speaker throughout is the community, and the words are addressed to God, with the exception of an apostrophe to the buried Israelites in the middle of the verse. There is indeed no decisive argument against the view of those who think that the first half of the verse expresses the longing of the nation for the restoration of its dead ("May thy dead live, &c."), and the second the triumphant assurance of the prophet that the prayer shall be fulfilled. But it is more probable that the language throughout is that of confident belief and hope.

Thy dead...arise] Render with R.V., **Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies** (collect. in Hebr.) **shall arise**. The dead saints are at once Jehovah's dead and Israel's.

for thy dew is as the dew of herbs] Better, **for a dew of lights is thy dew** (O Jehovah). Comp. James i. 17. The word means "herbs" in 2 Ki. iv. 39, but the idea is too prosaic for this passage. It is a heavenly, supernatural, dew that is meant; as soon as this falls on the dead they awake to life. Duhm refers to a Talmudic representation of a dew kept in the seventh heaven which is to descend on the bones of the dead and quicken them into life. "Light" and "life" are frequently and naturally associated: Ps. xxxvi. 9, lvi. 13; Job iii. 20, xxxiii. 30; John i. 4.

the earth shall cast out the dead] Render: **the earth** (or **the land**) **shall bring forth shades** (v. 14). The verb is lit. "cause to fall," but obviously in the sense explained under v. 18.

The doctrine of the resurrection here presented is reached through the conviction, gradually produced by the long process of revelation, that the final redemption of Israel could not be accomplished within the limits of nature. It became clear that the hopes and aspirations engendered by the Spirit in believing minds pointed forward to the great miracle here described, and thus the belief in the resurrection was firmly bound up with the indestructible hopes of the future of Israel (cf. Rom. xi. 15). The idea is exhibited in a form which is immature in the light of New Testament teaching, but it practically represents the highest

- 20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,
And shut thy doors about thee:
Hide thyself as it were for a little moment,
Until the indignation be overpast.
- 21 For behold, the LORD cometh out of his place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity:
The earth also shall disclose her blood,
And shall no more cover her slain.

development of Old Testament revelation on this subject. The only passage which is slightly in advance of this is Dan. xii. 2, and even there a universal resurrection is not taught. Here the hope is restricted to Israelites (see v. 14) and no doubt to those Israelites who had departed this life in the faith and fear of God. On the other hand, the teaching of this verse is quite different from such passages as Hos. vi. 2; Ez. xxxvii. 1—14. There rising from the dead is but a figurative clothing of the idea of national regeneration, whereas there can be no doubt that here a literal resurrection of individuals is foretold.

CH. XXVI. 20—XXVII. 13. THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROPHECY.

v. 20 resumes the connexion of the prophetic discourse, interrupted since xxv. 8; and this continues to the end, broken only by the lyrical passage, xxvii. 2—6. The contents, however, are of a somewhat mixed character, and the divisions are clearly marked.

(1) xxvi. vv. 20, 21.—A call to the people of God to hide themselves till the indignation be overpast.

(2) xxvii. v. 1.—Announcement of judgment on the great World-powers.

(3) vv. 2—6.—A song of Jehovah concerning His vineyard.

(4) vv. 7—11.—The moderation displayed in Jehovah's chastisement of Israel, and the lesson to be learned from it.

(5) vv. 12, 13.—A prophecy of the restoration of the dispersed of Israel.

20, 21. The storm of judgment is about to burst on the world, but it will be of short duration; let the people seclude themselves in the privacy of their chambers and wait for a glorious salvation (cf. Zeph. ii. 3; Dan. xii. 13).

20. *enter...and shut thy doors about thee*] Matt. vi. 6. There is nothing, however, to suggest that the words here are a summons to secret prayer. *until the indignation be overpast*] Job xiv. 13; Dan. xi. 36.

21. *the LORD is coming forth* (fut. instans) *out of his place*] i.e. heaven. Cf. Mic. i. 3.

the earth also...blood] Uncovered blood cries for vengeance (Gen. iv. 11; Ez. xxiv. 7, 8); and the earth, by drinking in innocent blood, seems to conspire with the murderer, by concealing his guilt. Comp. Job's impassioned cry in xvi. 18.

shall no more cover her slain] The idea here is the same: the

In that day the LORD with his sore and great and 27
strong sword

Shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent,

Even leviathan *that* crooked serpent;

And he shall slay the dragon that *is* in the sea.

In that day sing ye unto her,

earth will expose the dead bodies as evidence against the persecutors. It is at least doubtful if there is any thought of actual resurrection.

1. The judgment on the ungodly powers of this world, is represented symbolically as the destruction of three living monsters by the sword of Jehovah. It is disputed whether the reference is to the world-power in general, or to a single Empire, or to three separate Empires. Assuming that they are distinct the "Dragon that is in the sea" is almost certainly an emblem of Egypt (ch. li. 9; Ez. xxix. 3, xxxii. 2; Ps. lxxiv. 13). To the reference of the other two we have no key. It is of the essence of apocalyptic symbolism to be obscure; and it will always be possible, at any date, to find representatives, more or less suitable, of the three creatures. If the prophet wrote during or soon after the Exile they might denote Assyria and Babylonia; if at a later period, perhaps Babylonia and Persia, or even Persia and Greece.

For the *sword* of Jehovah cf. ch. xxxiv. 5, 6, lxvi. 16; Deut. xxxii. 41 f.; Ezek. xxi. 4, 5, 9 ff., &c. For *sore* render **hard**.

leviathan] The word apparently means "twisted," and is originally an epithet for the serpent. Although applied (probably) in Job xli. to the crocodile, it is no doubt mythological in its origin, denoting (like our "dragon") a fabulous monster figuring largely in popular legends. It is so used in Job iii. 8 and perhaps Ps. civ. 26; as a political symbol in Ps. lxxiv. 14 and here.

the piercing serpent] **the fugitive serpent**. The phrase occurs in Job xxvi. 13, where we have the wide-spread myth of the dragon that devours the sun (in eclipses, &c.). See Dr Davidson's *Job*, p. 20. How this astronomical dragon came to be specially connected with any political power we cannot tell; but we find an analogous case in the word Rahab as a symbol for Egypt (see on ch. xxx. 7).

even leviathan that crooked serpent] Render: **and Leviathan the tortuous serpent**.

the dragon that is in the sea] The *sea* means here the Nile, as often: see on xix. 5.

2—6. The song of the vineyard,—the counterpart of ch. v. 1 ff. This peculiar and perplexing passage has little relation to the context. It seems to fall into two stanzas; the first (vv. 2—4 a) expresses Jehovah's satisfaction in his vineyard (the Theocratic nation), the second (vv. 4 b—5, which however is obscure) states what He would do if it should again be injured by wicked men. v. 6 forms an appendix.

2. The verse probably runs thus: **In that day**—"Pleasant vine-

A vineyard of red wine.

3 I the LORD do keep it;

I will water it every moment:

Lest *any* hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

4 Fury *is* not in me:

Who would set the briers *and* thorns against me in battle?

I would go through them, I would burn them together.

5 Or let him take hold of my strength,

That he may make peace with me;

And he shall make peace with me.

6 He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root:

yard! Sing ye of it." The introductory formula (cf. ch. xxv. 9, xxvi. 1) is here curtailed to the bare note of time, "In that day"; the song itself begins with the words "Pleasant vineyard." This is preferable to making the last expression a part of the introduction. The construction of the A.V. is opposed to the order of words in the original.

A vineyard of red wine] The reading here (*kerem hemer*) is that of the majority of MSS. But a few MSS. (and indeed the common printed editions), as well as the LXX. and Targ., have *kerem hemed* ("pleasant vineyard"), and this as yielding the best sense is generally adopted by commentators. For the phrase see Am. v. 11.

3. *do keep it*] Better: **am its keeper**. For *I will water...I will keep*, substitute **I water...I keep**.

4. *Fury is not in me*] Or, **wrath have I none**. These words naturally go with the first stanza, expressing, as they seem to do, Jehovah's contentment with the condition of His vineyard.

who would set...battle] The phrase "Who will give?" is the well known Hebrew equivalent of the Latin *utinam*, "Would that!" Hence the R.V.: **O that the briers and thorns were against me in battle!**

briers and thorns] (ch. v. 6) must here mean heathen intruders. The next clause reads as in R.V.: **I would march upon them**. Cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 6 f.

5. *Or let him take hold, &c.*] **Else must he take hold of my strength**: lit. "my stronghold" or asylum: cf. 1 Kings i. 50, ii. 28. The figure is relinquished; the idea expressed being that unconditional surrender to Jehovah on the part of the ungodly is the only alternative to his annihilation.

The two last clauses **let him make peace...** differ only in the order of words, and should be translated alike (see R.V.).

6. The verse is attached to the song, but forms no integral part of it. It reads as in R.V.: **In days to come shall Jacob take root, &c.** By a unique ellipsis the word "days" is omitted in the original; hence the mistaken rendering of A.V., "them that come."

Israel shall blossom and bud,
And fill the face of the world *with* fruit.
Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote ⁷
him?

Or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that
are slain by him?

In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate ⁸
with it:

He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east
wind.

By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; ⁹

and fill the face of the world with fruit] For a contrast see ch. xiv. 21.
The fruitfulness anticipated belongs to the sphere of temporal prosperity,
—teeming population, &c.

7—11. A summons to national repentance and reformation. Has
Israel suffered the extremity of Divine punishment as its oppressors
have done (7)? There is a ground of hope in the moderation dis-
played by Jehovah in His chastisement of Israel; the prospect of
ultimate reconciliation is held out; and this hope will be realised when
all the monuments of idolatry are erased from the land (9). At present
the city lies desolate, a witness to the sinful blindness of the people and
the estrangement of its Creator (10, 11). The section is full of
difficulties. The words of v. 8 stand in no obvious relation to the
context, and are probably to be regarded (with Duhm) as a marginal
gloss to v. 10. The connexion between v. 9 and v. 10 is also somewhat
obscure.

7. For the thought cf. Jer. x. 24, 25. The interrogations imply,
of course, a negative answer; Jehovah has *not* smitten Israel as He has
those that smote it. In the second question the reading of LXX. and
Peshito is to be preferred on account of the parallelism: **hath he been
slain according to the slaughter of those that slew him** (Israel).

8. A very difficult verse. The first word in the Hebr. is supposed
to be a contracted reduplication of *šēh* (the third part of an ephah);
hence “by seah and seah” = “in exact measure,” “dealing out punish-
ment in carefully adjusted quantities” (Cheyne and Kay). But this
cannot be right. A better, though still precarious, sense is reached by
the help of a word (*sa’sa’a*) which the Arabs use in driving animals.
The first half of the verse would thus read: **By driving her forth, by
sending her away, thou contendest with her** (i.e. Israel). The allusion
is to the Exile, and perhaps the figure may be that of a divorced wife.
The last clause reads: **he hath removed (her) with his rough blast in
a day of east wind** (nearly as R.V.).

9. The condition of restoration and forgiveness. *Therefore* points
back to the idea of v. 7—the moderation of Israel’s punishment,—
while *By this*, i.e. (“on this condition”) points forward to the end of
the verse, the removal of idolatrous emblems.

be purged] **be expiated** (R.V. marg.).

And this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin;
When he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones
that are beaten in sunder,

The groves and images shall not stand up.

10 Yet the defenced city *shall be* desolate,
And the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness:
There shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down,
And consume the branches thereof.

11 When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be
broken off:

The women come, *and* set them on fire:

For it *is* a people of no understanding:

Therefore he that made them will not have mercy on
them,

And he that formed them will shew them no favour.

12 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the
river unto the stream of Egypt,

and this is all...sin] Better: **and this is the whole fruit of the taking away of his sin.** "Fruit" seems here to mean contemplated or expected issue,—*"the aim."*

when he maketh all the stones of the altar] Rather, **that he should make all altar-stones, &c.**

the groves and images, &c.] or, **the Asherim and sun-pillars** (see on xvii. 8) **shall not remain standing.**

10, 11. A picture of the desolation of Jerusalem, and the explanation of it. The commoner view is that the same hostile city as in xxv. 2, xxvi. 5 is referred to, but the latter part of v. 11 must refer to Israel. A partial parallel is found in ch. xlii. 19 ff.

10. *Yet the defenced city...*] Render with R.V.: **For the defenced city is solitary, an habitation deserted** (lit. "expelled") **and forsaken, &c.** The verbs throughout are in the present tense.

11. *women come, and set them on fire*] i.e. come thither to gather fuel.

a people of no understanding] (lit. "not a people of discernment") because it does not perceive that deliverance is delayed solely by its continued impenitence (ch. xliv. 18).

12, 13. The return from Exile,—a prophecy of the same character as ch. xi. 11—16.

12. *the LORD shall beat off...Egypt*] Rather: **Jehovah shall thresh out from the corn-ears of the River** (the Euphrates) **unto (those of) the brook of Egypt**, i.e. all that grows between those limits. The term "beat out" is applied both to the beating of olives from the tree (Deut. xxiv. 20) and to the beating out of grain with a staff—a more careful process than the ordinary methods (xxviii. 27; Jud. vi. 11).

And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.

And it shall come to pass in that day,

That the great trumpet shall be blown,

And they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria,

And the outcasts in the land of Egypt,

And shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

The latter analogy gives the best sense here. The "brook of Egypt" is the *Wadi el Arish*, the south-western frontier of Palestine, this and the Euphrates being the extreme boundaries of the ideal territory of Israel (Gen. xv. 18, &c.). The meaning is that within this territory Jehovah will carefully separate the corn from the chaff and straw,—the true Israelites from heathens and apostates. v. 13 then describes, under another figure, the ingathering of those who were exiled beyond these limits.

13. *the (a) great trumpet*] Cf. ch. xviii. 3; Zech. ix. 14; Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16.

they...which were ready to perish] **the lost ones.**

outcasts] Cf. ch. xi. 12.

CONCLUDING NOTE ON CH. XXIV.—XXVII.

The above exposition has left some general questions in suspense; and for the most part they are such as cannot be adequately discussed in this commentary. There are two, however, on which a few additional observations are necessary, viz., (1) the unity and (2) the date, of the prophecy.

(1) The question of *unity*, as raised by the recent criticisms of Duhm and Cheyne, relates principally to the lyrical passages already marked off in the notes (xxv. 1—5, 9—12, xxvi. 1—19, xxvii. 2—6), although it is acknowledged that the section xxvii. 7—11 presents difficulties almost as great. As has been hinted above, the commonly accepted view has been that the lyrics represent flights of the author's imagination, depicting the feelings of the redeemed community after the great judgment is past. The chief considerations urged against this view are as follows. (a) If we read consecutively xxiv., xxv. 6—8, xxvi. 20—xxvii. 1, 7—13, we have a series of conceptions which readily fit into a consistent picture of the future, and (at least up to xxvii. 1) a very natural sequence of thought. (b) the songs are distinguished from the main prophecy in poetic structure and rhythm, as well as in the point of view they represent. (c) They do not occur at places where their insertion would be natural if due to the literary plan of the composition, while one of them (xxv. 1—5) appears to interrupt a close connexion of thought. (d) The most important of all (xxvi. 1—19) is written in a vein of mingled exultation and despondency inappropriate to the

supposed situation. Although the reader is naturally averse to entertaining the idea of interpolation if it can possibly be avoided, it can hardly be denied that these arguments have a considerable cumulative force. (b) counts for little or nothing by itself, while the others may involve merely subjective differences of critical judgment. The crucial case is probably (d), where the 'ideal standpoint' theory could only be maintained by assuming that the writer's imagination lacks the strength of wing needful to bear him triumphantly away from the discouraging outlook of his actual present. It must be pointed out, however, that the demarcation of the lyrics given in the notes is adopted from Duhm and Cheyne, and to discuss the question of unity on this basis necessarily does some injustice to the views of other critics, who might prefer a different division.

(2) The question of the *date* of the prophecy is of course influenced by the view held as to its unity, although to a less extent than might be imagined, since both the critics named agree in regarding the whole series of compositions as belonging to the literature of a single general period. Duhm assigns them to the reign of John Hyrcanus, and finds allusions to the Parthian campaign of Antiochus Sidetes (B.C. 129) and the destruction of Samaria (c. 107). But there is really nothing to warrant these precise determinations, and the theory is negatived by well-established conclusions as to the close of the O.T. Canon. Cheyne's view is free from this objection and is in itself very attractive. The historical background of the prophecy is found in the events which preceded the dissolution of the Persian Empire (say 350—330). The gloomy survey of ch. xxiv. is explained by the "desolating and protracted wars" of the period, in which the Jews are known to have suffered severely and during which Jerusalem was not improbably laid waste by Persian armies. The premature songs of triumph referred to in ch. xxiv. 16 are supposed to have been called forth by rumours of the expedition of Alexander the Great, whilst the interspersed lyrical passages celebrate the Jewish deliverance achieved by the Macedonian victories. Perhaps the least convincing part of the hypothesis is the identification of the conquered city of xxv. 2, xxvi. 5, with Tyre or Gaza, destroyed by Alexander; but in spite of that Cheyne's view is probably the one which best harmonises the varied indications of the prophecy (see his *Introduction*, pp. 155 ff., and the refs. there).

Of rival theories there is perhaps but one that deserves careful examination, that, viz., which seeks the occasion of the prophecy in the age immediately succeeding the Exile, particularly the Babylonian troubles under Darius Hystaspis. There is, indeed, a surprising number of coincidences between the phenomena of this prophecy and the circumstances of that time or the contemporary literature. The expectation of a great overturning of existing political conditions occurs in the writings of Haggai (ii. 6, 7, 21—23) and Zechariah (i. 11 ff.); the idea of a world-judgment in Isa. xiii. 6 ff.; the universalism of xxv. 6—8 finds nowhere a more sympathetic response than in Isa. xl.—lv.; and even the 'songs of the righteous' (xxiv. 16) have a certain resemblance to xlv. 10. The allusion to recent idolatry in xxvii. 9 is amply accounted for; and the "city" (although too much has been made of this point) of xxiv. 10 ff.,

xxvii. 10 f., xxv. 2, xxvi. 5 might be Babylon, the "world-city," now humbled and soon to be utterly destroyed.

The ultimate decision probably turns on certain general features of the prophecy, which are thought to point to a very late age. These are (a) its apocalyptic colouring and imagery (see, however, the *caveat* on p. 179 above), (b) the advanced form in which it presents the doctrines of immortality (xxv. 8) and the resurrection (xxvi. 19); and (possibly) (c) the belief in tutelary genii of the nations. With regard to these phenomena many will agree with Cheyne that they "become the more intelligible the later we place this composition in the Persian period."

CHAPTERS XXVIII.—XXXII. (XXXIII.).

This important group of discourses is the chief monument of Isaiah's activity in the early years of Sennacherib's reign. The negotiations with Egypt which preceded the revolt of 701 form the historical thread on which the prophecies are strung, and by the help of the prophet's vivid allusions we can almost trace the development of the conspiracy from its first inception to the formal ratification of the treaty with Egypt (see xxviii. 15 [?], xxix. 15, xxx. 1 f., 6 f., xxxi. 1 ff.). The main interest of the chapters, however, lies in the light they throw upon Isaiah's outlook on the ultimate issue of this great providential crisis. Two leading ideas cross each other throughout in a manner which causes surprise and sometimes perplexity. On the one hand there is the anticipation of a sweeping judgment on the unbelief and perversity of the nation, and this is occasionally spoken of in terms which appear to imply the capture of Jerusalem and the complete annihilation of the Hebrew state. (See on ch. xxii. 1—14.) On the other hand the prospect of an immediate and signal intervention of Jehovah, for the salvation of Judah and the destruction of the Assyrians, is no less clearly expressed (as in x. 5—34, xvii. 12—14, xviii.). The peculiarity of the present section is that these two conceptions are presented in almost regular alternation (frequently with abrupt transition) while at the same time it appears impossible to merge them in a single harmonious picture of the future (see further General Introd., pp. xxxvi f. and the notes below).

That the prophecies are rightly assigned to the reign of Sennacherib would probably never have been questioned but for the opening verses (xxviii. 1—4), which must undoubtedly have been written before the fall of Samaria. Accordingly a few critics have held that this passage determines the date of the whole series, while a larger number detach ch. xxviii. from the group and assign it alone to the time before the overthrow of North Israel. It is easier, however, (in view of the numerous affinities between xxviii. and xxix.—xxxi.) to suppose that the opening oracle was for some special reason repeated by Isaiah in the time of Sennacherib, or at least incorporated in a volume of prophecies belonging to that period. The objections to throwing the whole cycle back to the earlier date appear insurmountable. Not only is the great decisive act of Jehovah anticipated within a very short space of time (xxix. 1, 2, xxxii. 10), but the whole situation presupposed is such

as never emerged, so far as is known, prior to the years 704—701. What we have to do with is evidently no mere series of covert and underhand intrigues with Egypt; but a formal alliance with that empire involving an open revolt against Assyria. The nation has resolved to stake everything on a single desperate venture. Of negotiations with Egypt in the years 725—722 we have no record whatever; and if any took place they must, like those of 711, have been checked before leading to a declared rupture with the Assyrians. In these circumstances it would be extremely hazardous to abandon the assured historical ground supplied by the events of 704—701 in favour of any hypothetical rebellion at an earlier time.

The principal divisions are marked by the interjection *Hôî* ("woe"): xxviii. 1, xxix. 1, 15, xxx. 1, xxxi. 1, xxxiii. 1. /

CH. XXVIII. ISAIAH'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE DISSOLUTE NOBLES OF JERUSALEM.

U The chapter contains four separate discourses:

i. vv. 1—6. A denunciation of the "drunkards of Ephraim," with an announcement of the speedy fall of their beautiful city (1—4); ending with a brief glance at the Messianic age beyond the judgment (5, 6). That the first four verses are a real prediction and were therefore uttered before 722 is hardly open to question; but it is not improbable that they were republished by Isaiah as an introduction to the volume of his prophecies (cf. xxx. 8) connected with the revolt against Sennacherib.

ii. vv. 7—13. For, continues the prophet, the dissipation for which the northern capital was once notorious is now a startling symptom of the state of society in Jerusalem (7, 8). The policy of rebellion has been hatched by a clique of drunkards. What follows (9—13) evidently reproduces a remarkable dialogue between Isaiah and the leaders of the Egyptian party at one of their disgraceful orgies. The prophet has forced his way into the banquet-chamber; the unmasked debauchees turn on him with insolent raillery, and express in mocking tones their impatience of the irksome monotony of his teaching (9, 10); but Isaiah throws back their sarcasm in their teeth, telling them of a day when Jehovah will speak to them in a far more grievous language, which they cannot fail to understand (11—13).

iii. vv. 14—22. A warning against the scornful irreligious temper displayed by the politicians who built their hopes on the alliance with Egypt. With fatuous self-confidence they spoke of their cherished scheme as a covenant with Death and Hell, i.e. as one that secured perfect immunity from every conceivable kind of danger or evil (14, 15). The prophet declares that in the storm of judgment which is fast approaching, every false refuge will be swept away, and those alone will escape who put their trust in Jehovah's immutable purpose of salvation towards Zion (16—22).

iv. vv. 23—29. A justification of God's providential dealings with Israel, based on the analogy of the varied operations of agriculture. The wisdom of the husbandman is a reflection of the Infinite Wisdom which governs the world; consistency of aim with diversity of method

Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of 28
 Ephraim,
 Whose glorious beauty *is* a fading flower,
 Which *are* on the head of the fat valleys of them
 that are overcome with wine.
 Behold, the LORD hath a mighty and strong one, 2
 Which as a tempest of hail *and* a destroying storm,
 As a flood of mighty waters overflowing,
 Shall cast down to the earth with the hand.
 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, 3

is the characteristic of both. As the farmer varies his activity from season to season, and modifies his treatment in accordance with the nature of his crops, so in the Divine discipline of humanity there is the same wise adaptation of means to ends, and the same patient pursuit of a single beneficial aim through the mingled "goodness and severity" of God. ✓

1—4. The fate of the drunkards of Ephraim. On the luxury and debauchery of Samaria, see Am. iii. 12, 15, iv. 1, vi. 1, 6.

1. In a single image of great beauty the prophet describes the picturesque situation of the city, the tone of its society, and its ripeness for judgment. Samaria, with its ramparts and white terraced streets crowning the summit of a low hill, which rises in the middle of a fertile valley (1 Ki. xvi. 24), is compared to the chaplet of flowers that wreathes the flushed temples of a reveller (cf. Wisd. Sol. ii. 7, 8). But the long carousal is nearly over, the wreath is already faded and soon (v. 3) will be dashed to the ground. The verse should be read:

Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,
 And (to) the fading flower of his glorious beauty,
 Which is upon the fat valley of the wine-smitten.

overcome (lit. "struck down") *with wine*] (*οἰνοπληγες*) the last stage of intoxication. Hard drinking is compared to a combat between the toper and his drink, in which the latter is victorious, ch. xvi. 8.

2. The reason for the woe of v. 1. Render: **Behold Jehovah hath a mighty and strong one, like a tempest of hail, a destroying storm; like a flow of mighty overflowing waters, which casts down to the earth with violence.**

a mighty and strong one] i.e. the Assyrian, Jehovah's instrument (ch. x. 5).

a destroying storm] Delitzsch renders, less suitably perhaps, "a pestilential wind." The word occurs again only in Deut. xxxii. 24; Ps. xci. 6; but a closely related one in Hos. xiii. 14 (A.V. "destruction"). The image of the storm, here presented in three forms, recurs in vv. 15, 18f.

shall cast] Better, **casts** (perf. of experience, Davidson, *Synt.* § 40, e). The subj. is the storm of waters.
with the hand] i.e. with force.

Shall be trodden under feet :

- 4 And the glorious beauty, which *is* on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower,
And as the hasty fruit before the summer ;
 Which *when* he that looketh upon it seeth,
 While it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

- 5 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory,
 And for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,
 6 And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment,

3. The verb *shall be trodden* is in the plural number. Apparently the prophet intended to include in its subject both the images of *v.* 1; but his thoughts were diverted by the other figure which is developed in *v.* 4. In the Hebr. the order is: **With the feet shall be trodden down the proud crown of the, &c.** (as *v.* 1).

4. Render: **And the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley** (*v.* 1), **shall be like the early fig before the fruit-harvest, &c.** These "early figs," which might be found in the end of June, several weeks before the proper fig-season (in August), were esteemed a great delicacy; Hos. ix. 10; Mic. vii. 1; Nah. iii. 12; Jer. xxiv. 2.

which when he...seeth] Render: **which when any one seeth** (lit. "(the seer) seeth"; indef. subj., Davidson, *Synt.* § 108, R. 1). To see, to snatch, to swallow, is the work of a moment. So greedily and hastily and easily shall the Assyrians devour Samaria!

5, 6. Jehovah Himself the true glory of His people; a Messianic pendant to the foregoing picture of Samaria's fall. The phrase *in that day* points as usual to the indefinite future of the Messianic age, not to the day of the judgment on North Israel. Whether the "remnant of His people" denotes the survivors of the Northern tribes, or those of Judah, or of the whole nation, it means a converted remnant; and there is no reason to suppose that Isaiah at any time expected the conversion of Judah to follow immediately the destruction of Ephraim. He is here looking beyond the whole series of national judgments, and the insertion of the promise is evidently suggested by the contrast between the false glory that has vanished and the true glory which shall endure.

5. *a crown of glory*] no longer a "crown of pride," as *vv.* 1, 3.

diadem of beauty] The word *šēphîrāh* (diadem) occurs again only in Ezek. vii. 7, 10 (where, however, the sense is disputed). It probably denotes a "ring" or circlet.

the residue (remnant) of his people] The exact phrase is not found elsewhere.

And for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way;

● The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink,

They are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink;

They err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.

For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness,

8

So that there is no place clean.

● 6. Jehovah is not only the beauty of the redeemed nation, but the source of all civic and martial virtues.

a spirit of judgment] The same phrase (but with a different meaning) occurs in ch. iv. 4. "Spirit" is used here as in ch. xi. 2. *to him that sitteth in judgment*] (or "over the judgment[-seat]")—the king or the judge (cf. ch. xxxii. 1).

for strength (or, *valour*) *to them that...gate*] Better, **at the gate**, not the gate of the enemy, but of the city or land (Nah. iii. 13) into which the enemy have penetrated. The promise is somewhat remarkable for Isaiah (cf. Mic. v. 5 ff.).

● 7, 8 form the literary introduction to the dramatic incident represented in vv. 9—13; they are not part of Isaiah's spoken discourse on that occasion. The opening words **But these also** (R.V.) connect this section with the preceding, but the connexion is due to similarity of subject, and not to coincidence of date. There are obvious reasons why the prediction of the fall of Samaria should be republished in the time of Sennacherib. The magnates of Jerusalem were following the lead of Samaria, both in their dissolute habits and in their foolish trust in an Egyptian alliance; Samaria is a mirror in which they may read their own character and their own doom. On intemperance among the Judæan nobility see ch. v. 11 f., 22.

● 7. *the priest and the prophet*] Better: **priest and prophet**. These are specially mentioned as the spiritual leaders of the people, who opposed Isaiah in the name of Jehovah, and backed up the plans of the politicians with the pretended authority of Divine revelation.

swallowed up of wine] Perhaps, "confused by wine," see on iii. 12. *are out of the way*] R.V. **have gone astray**—see xix. 14.

● *vision* (a peculiar form in the Hebr.) refers to the function of the prophets; *judgment* (lit. "judicial matters") to that of the priests (cf. Deut. xvii. 8 ff., xix. 17; Ezek. xlv. 24). It is not asserted that the prophets have no visions, but only that, through self-indulgence, they lack the capacity to discern their real significance.

8. For *vomit and filthiness*, read **filthy vomit**.

9—13. The occasion of this remarkable encounter was probably a feast held to celebrate the renunciation of allegiance to Assyria. Isaiah

- 9 Whom shall he teach knowledge?
And whom shall he make to understand doctrine?
Them that are weaned from the milk,
And drawn from the breasts.
- 10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept;
Line upon line, line upon line;
Here a little, *and* there a little:
- 11 For with stammering lips and another tongue
Will he speak to this people.
- 12 To whom he said,
This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to
rest;

has surprised the drunkards over their cups and administered some such rebuke as we read in *vv.* 7, 8. (On the excesses that often accompanied sacrificial meals, see 1 Sam. i. 13 f.; Am. ii. 8.)

9. The retort of the revellers to Isaiah's recriminations. The meaning is: "Who are we that we should thus be lectured by this man? Are we newly-weaned infants, &c.?" (cf. R.V.). *Whom will he teach knowledge?* expresses the injured self-consciousness of the priests; *whom will he make to understand doctrine?* that of the prophets. For *doctrine* R.V. has **the message**; the word commonly means "report," but here it denotes "that which is heard" (by prophetic audition) from the Lord, as in *v.* 19; ch. liii. 1; Jer. xlix. 14; Ob. 1.

10. The topers proceed to mock, in stammering drunken tones, the excited utterance and the wearisome iterations of the prophet's teaching. Translate with R.V. (marg.) **For it is precept upon precept...rule upon rule...here a little, there a little.** The Hebr. is a series of monosyllables (*çav lâ-çav çav lâ-çav çav lâ-çav çav lâ-çav z'êr shâm z'êr shâm*); the sense is not quite certain, but the tones sufficiently represent at once the disgust of the speakers with the restless persistency of their monitor and their own inability to express themselves distinctly.

11. Isaiah parries the gibe with a terrible threat. Jehovah is about to employ a more uncouth language, to which their mocking description will fully apply, viz., the harsh barbarous accents of the Assyrian invaders.

stammering lips] either "stammerings of lip" or "stammerers of lip" (cf. the Greek use of *βάρβαρος*). Comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 21.

12. *To whom he said*] Rather: **He who said to them.** The verse reproduces the tenor and aim of all Isaiah's teaching (cf. *v.* 16; ch. xxx. 15). He had sought to point out the true way of rest for the exhausted nation by abstinence from the spirited foreign policy advocated by the anti-Assyrian faction. Two translations, however, are possible. Either: "This (Jerusalem) is the resting-place; give rest to the weary; and this is the place of refreshment"; or: **This (line of action) is the (true) rest...and this is the (true) refreshment.** The

And this *is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear.
 But the word of the LORD was unto them 13
 Precept upon precept, precept upon precept;
 Line upon line, line upon line;
 Here a little, *and* there a little;
 That they might go, and fall backward, and be broken,
 And snared, and taken.

Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, 14
 That rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem.
 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with 15
 death,
 And with hell are we at agreement;

latter seems preferable. The word for "rest" (usually "resting-place") is used in the same sense as here in 2 Sam. xiv. 17. "The weary" is the ordinary plebeian, who had everything to lose and nothing to gain, by the chances of war.

13. *But the word of the LORD was*] Render: **And (so) the word of Jehovah shall be**--all that they had scoffingly said about Isaiah's message (v. 10), a monotonous, intolerable, yet unavoidable, succession of judgments (cf. v. 19).

that they might...backward] **that they may go and stumble backwards** (cf. ch. vi. 11, 12). *and be broken...taken*] as in ch. viii. 15.

14—22. There is again a *literary* connexion with what precedes; although the passage is probably a summary of an independent discourse. The prophet's aim is to impress on his opponents the disastrous consequences of persisting in their scoffing attitude towards himself and his message.

14. *ye scornful men*] Better: **scoffing men**. The "scoffer" (*lêç*, a word almost confined to Pss. and Prov.) represents the last degree of ungodliness,—open contempt of religion. The phrase here is applied to worldly politicians, who form their plans in defiance of Jehovah's revealed will (cf. v. 22; ch. xxix. 20).

that rule this people] The prophet's antagonists are the party which has gained the upper hand in the councils of state; the king himself is tacitly acquitted of responsibility.

15 is the protasis to v. 16 f.

Because ye have said] Isaiah no doubt clothes the thoughts of the conspirators in his own language; but the vagueness of the allusions corresponds to the air of mystery which shrouded their designs. The utmost secrecy was observed with regard to the negotiations with Egypt (ch. xxix. 15, xxx. 1), and it is doubtful if at this time Isaiah knew exactly what project was on foot.

with hell are we at agreement] Lit. **with Sheôl we have made a vision**. The simplest explanation of this and the preceding expression

When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come *unto* us:

For we have made lies our refuge,
And under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD,
Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone,
A tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure
foundation:
He that believeth shall not make haste.

is that the political plot had been ratified by a compact with the dreaded powers of the underworld. That those who had renounced the guidance of Jehovah should have recourse to necromancy and other superstitions was natural (ch. viii. 19). At the same time the phrases may be proverbial, or they may merely express Isaiah's abhorrence of the dark immorality which marked the proceedings. In any case the feeling attributed to the schemers is one of absolute security against the worst that fate could bring.

the overflowing scourge—a mixture of metaphors, which is still further increased in v. 18.

we have made lies our refuge] The reference might be to conscious political treachery (towards Assyria), but more probably it is to false grounds of confidence, such as false oracles (Ezek. xiii. 6—8; Mic. ii. 11), Isaiah putting his own language into their mouth.

16. There is but one true ground of confidence—Jehovah's revealed purpose with regard to Zion.

Behold, I lay] Strictly: **Behold, I am he that hath laid** (for the Hebr. construction cf. ch. xxix. 14, xxxviii. 5). The figure of the verse requires little explanation; it is illustrated by the massive and "costly" stones which formed the foundations of Solomon's temple (1 Ki. v. 17). And the general idea is that Jehovah's relation to Israel is the stable and permanent, though invisible, foundation of all God's work in the world. Beyond this it is hardly necessary to go in seeking an answer to the question, Of what is the stone an emblem? It is not Jehovah Himself, since it is Jehovah who lays it; it is not the Temple, nor Mount Zion, nor the Davidic dynasty, for these are at most but visible symbols of a spiritual fact disclosed to the prophet's faith. The foundation stone represents the one element in human history which is indestructible, viz., the purpose of God, and that purpose as historically realised in the relation which He has established between Himself and the people of Israel.

a sure foundation] Transl. with R.V. of **sure foundation**.

he that believeth shall not make haste] The LXX. reads "shall not be ashamed" (*yēbōsh* for *yāhīsh*). Cheyne and others propose a slight emendation (*yāmūsh*) which gives the sense "shall not give way." This is the second great passage in which Isaiah emphasises faith as the primary condition of salvation (ch. vii. 9).

Judgment also will I lay to the line, 17
 And righteousness to the plummet:
 And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,
 And the waters shall overflow the hiding place.
 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, 18
 And your agreement with hell shall not stand;
 When the overflowing scourge shall pass through,
 Then ye shall be trodden down by it.
 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: 19
 For morning by morning shall it pass over, by day
 and by night:
 And it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.
 For the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch 20
 himself *on it*:

The image of the verse recurs in Ps. cxviii. 22; and is applied to the Messiah in Rom. ix. 33, x. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 6—8 (following the LXX. text).

17. The first half of the verse continues *v.* 16. In order to build on this foundation, it is necessary that political conduct be conformed to the eternal principles of the Divine government; these are "judgment" and "righteousness" (see on i. 21), which are here compared to the builder's *line* and *plummet*. Render as in R.V. **I will make judgment the line and righteousness the plummet.** Cf. ch. xxxiv. 11.

and the hail...] Every course of action not based on faith in Jehovah, and not in accordance with the strict rule of the Divine righteousness will prove a false refuge in the day of judgment, see *v.* 15 and cf. *v.* 2. Comp. also Matt. vii. 24—27. The verb "sweep away" is not found elsewhere.

18. See on *v.* 15. *shall be disannulled*] lit. "smeared over" (cf. Gen. vi. 14) i.e. "cancelled," "obliterated." The verb is the technical word for expiate (as e.g. xxii. 14), and although it is nowhere else in the O.T. used exactly as here, the sense is supported by Syriac usage, and an alteration of the text is not necessary.

19. *From the time that it goeth forth*] Render as R.V. **As often as it passeth through** (1 Sam. xviii. 30). *it shall take you away*] The judgment will be a protracted visitation (like the repeated blows of a "scourge") and will continue till every one of the conspirators has been carried away.

it shall be a vexation...report] Perhaps: **it shall be sheer vexation to interpret audition** (the same word as *v.* 9). That is, all prophetic oracles shall then be so uniformly and unambiguously terrible, that the prophet will shrink from the unwelcome task of communicating their import.

20. A proverbial expression for the intolerable situation which the politicians are preparing for themselves and their country.

And the covering narrower than that *he* can wrap himself *in it*.

- 21 For the LORD shall rise up as *in* mount Perazim,
He shall be wroth as *in* the valley of Gibeon,
That *he* may do his work, his strange work;
And bring to pass his act, his strange act.
- 22 Now therefore be ye not mockers,
Lest your bands be made strong:
For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts
A consumption, even determined
Upon the whole earth.
- 23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice;
Hearken, and hear my speech.

21. The "strangeness" of Jehovah's work (v. 12, x. 12) consists in his fighting with the foreigners against his own people. The historical allusions are to David's victories over the Philistines in the vicinity of Jerusalem; see 2 Sam. v. 20 f.; 1 Chron. xiv. 11 f. (Baal-Perazim); 2 Sam. v. 25 (Geba); 1 Chron. xiv. 16 (Gibeon, as here). The last part reads: **to perform his act—strange is his act! and to work his work—barbarous is his work!**

22. A final appeal to the "scoffers" (v. 14), based on the irreversible decision of Jehovah.

be ye not mockers] **do not play the scoffer.**

lest your bands be made strong] i.e. "lest ye be firmly bound and delivered up for execution."

a consumption, even determined] **an extermination and a decisive work** (as ch. x. 23).

23—29. A parable derived from husbandry. The motive of its insertion in this place was probably the different treatment meted out to Samaria and to Jerusalem. The precise point of the analogy is somewhat uncertain; but perhaps we may interpret the thought as follows. There are two parts. The first (vv. 24—26) appears to justify Jehovah's procedure by the end He has in view. As the farmer does not go on ploughing for ever out of a mere blind passion for ploughing, but ploughs in order to sow; so Jehovah's work of judgment is to issue in the preparation of a seed-plot, and in due time ploughing will give place (in the case of Judah) to sowing. The second (vv. 27—29) draws the lesson that the operation of threshing varies with the material to be operated on. The delicate fennel, e.g. would be destroyed by the rough implements used on coarser grain; and in Judah there is (what there was not in Samaria) the tender growth of the "holy seed," the nucleus of the true Israel, for whose sake judgment must be tempered with mercy.

23. The introduction to the parable; cf. ch. xxxii. 9.

24—26. Ploughing is followed by sowing.

Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? 24
 Doth he open and break the clods of his ground?
 When he hath made plain the face thereof, 25
 Doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the
 cummin,
 And cast in the principal wheat
 And the appointed barley and the rye *in* their place?
 For his God doth instruct him to discretion, *and* doth 26
 teach him.

24. *all day*] i.e. **continually** (R.V.), “uninterruptedly.” The emphasis of the question lies on this word.

to sow is an awkward addition and may be a gloss. If genuine the sense must be paraphrased “seeing he has the intention of sowing.”

doth he open...ground] Trans. **doth he (continually) open and harrow his ground?**

25. *fitches* (R.V. marg. **black cummin** [*Nigella sativa*]) and *cummin* [*Cuminum sativum*] are both mentioned only in this passage. Note the different methods of sowing; **scatter** (of the fitches), **sow** (of the cummin), **plant** (of wheat and barley). The planting of wheat, &c. in rows is a mark of the most careful husbandry, still practised in Yemen and Egypt.

the principal wheat] Rather: **the wheat in rows** (R.V.).

the appointed barley] a very difficult expression. Perhaps “barley in the appointed place” (R.V.). Both this adjective and that for “principal” are wanting in the LXX. and are deleted as mistakes or glosses by Cheyne and others.

the rye in their place] **the spelt** (others, “vetches”) **as its border** (see R.V.). The allusion apparently is to a custom of surrounding certain crops with a protecting border of hardier plants.

26. All this is done in obedience to an inherited, almost instinctive, wisdom, which rests ultimately on Divine inspiration. See *v.* 29; and *Ecclus.* vii. 15 (“husbandry which the Most High hath ordained”). *Verg. Georg.* I. 147.

to discretion] **to right**, i.e. “right, or orderly, method.” The word is that usually rendered “judgment,” used here in a non-ethical application.

27—29. Threshing is not bruising. Three methods of threshing are alluded to. (a) Beating with a rod or flail (cf. *Jud.* vi. 11; *Ruth* ii. 17). (b) Treading with the feet of cattle (*Deut.* xxv. 4; *Mic.* iv. 13; but see on *v.* 28). (c) Drawing a heavy wooden sledge, with sharp stones or iron spikes fixed in its under surface (*ḥārūṣ*) or a wagon (*‘āgālāh*) with a great number of sharp-edged wheels, over the grain. The point of the illustration is that the method suitable to one kind of grain would be ruinous to another (*v.* 27); and that even the rougher methods are applied with moderation (*v.* 28).

- 27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing *instrument*,
Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin ;
But the fitches are beaten out with a staff,
And the cummin with a rod.
- 28 Bread *corn* is bruised ;
Because he will not ever be threshing it,
Nor break *it with* the wheel of his cart,
Nor bruise *it with* his horsemen.
- 29 This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts,
Which is wonderful in counsel, *and* excellent in working.

27. *with a threshing instrument*] the sledge (*hārûç*). *a cart wheel*
the wheel of a threshing wagon (*‘ăgālāh*).

28. Transl. **Is bread (corn) crushed? Nay, he does not keep threshing it perpetually, &c.** If the text be right, the sentence continues “and rolling his wagon-wheels and horses over it, &c.” But the mention of “horses” as employed in agriculture is suspicious, and a better sense is gained if, with Duhm, we slightly change the text of that word and translate thus: **But when he has rolled his wagon-wheel (over it), he scatters it** (i.e. “tosses it up to the wind,”—the same word in Ezek. xvii. 21) **without having crushed it.**

29. To Isaiah there is something very impressive in the peasant’s subtle yet unpretentious knowledge of his craft; he is like a part of nature, and his wisdom seems a direct emanation from the infinite Wisdom to which all things owe their being (cf. v. 26).

which is wonderful...working] **wonderful is His counsel, great His wisdom**; lit. “He produces wonderful counsel, He magnifies wisdom” (cf. “Wonderful Counsellor,” ch. ix. 6). The word rendered “working” is a technical term of the Wisdom Literature. It seems to denote that which is essentially rational. “It is said of a state or action when it corresponds to the idea; and conversely of thought when it corresponds to the reality” (Davidson, *Job*, p. 39, in this series).

CH. XXIX. 1—14. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF JEHOVAH’S WONDERFUL PURPOSE REGARDING JERUSALEM, AND ITS RECEPTION ON THE PART OF THE PEOPLE.

Under the second “Woe” (v. 1) are grouped two oracles, which may have been originally independent; or they may be intimately connected, the second describing the effect of the first on the minds of Isaiah’s hearers.

i. vv. 1—8. The impending humiliation and deliverance of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, apostrophised by the mystic name of “Ariel,” is at present gay and careless and secure, the festal calendar follows its accustomed course, and this state of things may endure for a short time longer (1). But already in vision the prophet sees her beset by hosts

Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city *where* David dwelt! 29
Add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices.
Yet I will distress Ariel,

of enemies, and reduced to the lowest depths of despair (2—4) when suddenly the Lord Himself, arrayed in the terrors of earthquake and tempest, appears in judgment (6), and in a moment the scene is changed. In the very hour of their triumph, the enemies of Zion are disappointed of their expectation, and vanish like a vision of the night (7, 8).

ii. vv. 9—14. A rebuke of the spiritual blindness and unbelief, and the hollow formal religion prevalent amongst all classes of the people.

(1) vv. 9—12. Jehovah has visited the leaders of the people with judicial blindness (9f.); the consequence is that neither among the cultured nor the unlettered can the word of the Lord find entrance (11f.).

(2) vv. 13, 14. Because the popular religion has degenerated into a mechanical routine of traditional observances (13) it is necessary for Jehovah to adopt startling measures, transcending all human calculation and insight (14). *h*

1. Jerusalem's time of joyous security shall speedily come to an end.

Ho Ariel, Ariel, city where David encamped! (R.V.). Of the word "Ariel" two explanations (both ancient) are given. (a) That which renders it "Lion of God" is undoubtedly the one most naturally suggested by the form of the word. It is also thought to be confirmed by the proper name 'ar'ēlī in Gen. xlvī. 16; Num. xxvi. 17; and the "lion-like men" ('ārīēl) of 2 Sam. xxiii. 20; 1 Chron. xi. 22; although all these analogies are very doubtful (cf. ch. xxxiii. 7). But is it suitable in the present context? Hardly, unless we take v. 2 to mean that Jerusalem when driven to bay, will exhibit a prowess worthy of her mystic appellation; which is not at all the idea of the passage. The name is in any case a strange one for a city, and it would be difficult to account for its selection by Isaiah. (b) The other (and preferable) explanation is given by the Targum, and is supported by a word which occurs in two forms (*har'ēl* and *'ārī'ēl*) in Ezek. xliii. 15f. It appears to mean "altar-hearth"; and occurs, probably in the same sense, in the inscription of the Moabite Stone. The translation here will be either "hearth of God" or (better) simply "altar-hearth." How Isaiah was led to such a designation we shall see from v. 2.

where *David dwelt*] R.V. **encamped**. Not "against which" David encamped, as the LXX. fancied (see on v. 3), but which he occupied and fortified.

add ye year to year] i.e. "let a year or two more come and go": cf. xxxii. 10. The discourse was probably delivered at the leading festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the "turn of the year" (Ex. xxxiv. 22) in ancient Israel.

let them kill sacrifices] R.V. has the true rendering: **let the feasts come round**; "run their round"—but only a few times more.

2—5. The humiliation and distress of Ariel, at the hands of the Assyrians.

- And there shall be heaviness and sorrow:
 And it shall be unto me as Ariel.
- 3 And I will camp against thee round about,
 And will lay siege against thee *with* a mount,
 And I will raise forts against thee.
- 4 And thou shalt be brought down, *and* shalt speak out
 of the ground,
 And thy speech shall be low out of the dust,
 And thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar
 spirit, out of the ground,
 And thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.
- 5 Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like
 small dust,
 And the multitude of the terrible ones *shall be* as chaff
 that passeth away:

2. *there shall be heaviness and sorrow*] Better: "mourning and lamentation" (R.V.), but still better (as reproducing the assonance of the original): **moaning and bemoaning** (Cheyne). The expression recurs in Lam. ii. 5.

it shall be unto me as Ariel] **she shall be to me like a (true) altar-hearth** (*Kaph veritatis*). If Ariel meant "Lion of God" this clause would necessarily have to be understood in a favourable sense; on the view here followed it may be either a promise or a threat; the context decides for the latter. The meaning is that Jerusalem will be either a place where the flames of war rage fiercely, or a place reeking with the blood of countless human victims. We may suppose that Isaiah addressed these words to the worshippers in the Temple, and that the great altar with its bleeding victims stood out before his mind as an emblem of Jerusalem's fate, and suggested the name "Ariel."

3. *I will camp against thee round about*] see v. 1. LXX. carries the parallel still further by reading "I will encamp...*like David*," a reading which would be plausible if "against which" could be fairly supplied in v. 1. "Round about" is the same word as "like a ball" in xxii. 18.

with a mount] R.V. **with a fort**; perhaps lines of circumvallation. For *forts*, read **siege-works**, as R.V. Comp. Ezek. iv. 1—3.

4 explains the "moaning and bemoaning" of v. 2. The verse reads: **And thou shalt be laid low, speaking from (beneath) the earth, and thy speech shall come humbly from the dust; and thy voice shall be like (that of) a ghost (coming) from the earth, and thy speech shall squeak from the dust.** The allusions in the latter half of the verse are explained under ch. viii. 19. The figures signify the utter abasement and exhaustion of the "joyous city."

5—8. The discomfiture and dispersion of Zion's enemies in the hour of their triumph.

5. *thy strangers*] the barbarians who assail thee.

Yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.

Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts 6

With thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise,
With storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring
 fire.

And the multitude of all the nations that fight against *7*
 Ariel,

Even all that fight against her and her munition, and
 that distress her,

Shall be as a dream of a night vision.

It shall even be as when a hungry *man* dreameth, and *8*
 behold, he eateth;

But he awaketh, and his soul *is* empty:

Or as when a thirsty *man* dreameth, and behold, he
 drinketh;

But he awaketh, and behold, *he is* faint, and his soul
 hath appetite:

So shall the multitude of all the nations be,
 That fight against mount Zion.

Stay yourselves, and wonder; 9

the terrible ones] or the tyrants.

6. See ch. xxx. 27—33. The last words of *v.* 5 should be read as part of this sentence. **And suddenly, full suddenly, she shall be visited**, &c. The word for “visit” is ambiguous, being freely used both of punishment and mercy, but the passive appears never to be employed in a good sense except here.

7, 8. The figure of the dream is applied in two ways; first, objectively, to the vanishing of the enemy; second, subjectively, to his disappointment.

7. *her munition*] perhaps **her citadel** (R.V. “stronghold”).

a dream of a night vision] R.V. **a dream, a vision of the night**.

8. *dreameth, and behold*] The invariable formula in narrating a dream; Gen. xl. 9, 16, xli. 1 ff.; Dan. ii. 31, vii. 5, 6.

his soul] the seat of appetite and desire: cf. *v.* 14, xxxii. 6; Prov. vi. 30. A more vivid representation of utter disenchantment than this verse gives can scarcely be conceived.

9—12. The people meet their doom in a state of spiritual stupor, unobservant of Jehovah’s work, and heedless of the warnings given to them.

9. *Stay yourselves, and wonder*] Rather (as R.V. marg.), **Be ye amazed and wonder**. The first verb is of uncertain derivation. Probably both express the idea of astonishment. Cheyne (*Comm.*) rendered: “astonish yourselves and be astonished.”

Cry ye out, and cry :

They are drunken, but not *with* wine ;

They stagger, but not *with* strong drink.

10 For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep,

And hath closed your eyes :

The prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed,

Which *men* deliver to one that is learned,

Saying, Read this, I pray thee :

And he saith, I cannot ; for it *is* sealed :

12 And the book is delivered to *him* that is not learned, Saying, Read this, I pray thee :

And he saith, I am not learned.

13 Wherefore the Lord said,

Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth,

cry ye out, and cry] Render: **Blind yourselves and be blind.** The root of both verbs is that used in ch. vi. 10 of "smearing" the eyes: the doom then threatened is now being fulfilled.

they are drunken...they stagger] These perfects should probably be pointed and translated as imperatives; "be drunken" (so the LXX.).

10. Their infatuation is caused by Jehovah; see on ch. vi. 10.

deep sleep] The word (*tardēmāh*) is nearly always used of a profound slumber due to supernatural agency (1 Sam. xxvi. 12) and favourable for the reception of Divine revelations (Job iv. 13). The expressions *the prophets* and *the seers* are obviously glosses, based on a misconception of the meaning of the verse. Render: **hath closed your eyes, and your heads hath he covered** (or **muffled**).

11, 12. A distinction is drawn between the ignorance of the educated and that of the uneducated classes. The man of culture is like one who *will* not break the seal of a sealed book that he may read it; the man in the street *cannot* read it even if unsealed. The passage is interesting as illustrating the diffusion of literary education in Isaiah's time (cf. Jer. v. 4, 5).

11. *the vision of all*] i.e. the revelation of all this (cf. Ps. xlix. 17, "all that").

learned] is literally "knowing letters."

13, 14. This spiritual insensibility of the people is the outcome of its whole religious attitude, which is insincere, formal, and traditional. The contrast implied is that between a religion of mere ritual and one of moral fellowship with God.

13. *draw near* (i.e. worship) *me with their mouth, and with their*

And with their lips do honour me,
But have removed their heart far from me,
And their fear towards me is taught *by* the
precept of men:

Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous ¹⁴
work amongst this people,

Even a marvellous work and a wonder:

For the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish,
And the understanding of their prudent *men*
shall be hid.

lips do honour me] A.V. is here unquestionably right against R.V., which slavishly follows the Hebrew accentuation, rendering, "draw nigh, and with their mouth and with their lips do honour me." ^{with}
their mouth...their lips]—uttering the prescribed liturgical formulæ.

have removed their heart far from me] The heart is the organ of intelligence and moral obedience and inclination (cf. Prov. xxiii. 26).

their fear towards me] R.V. **their fear of me**, i.e. their piety, religion.

is taught by the precept of men] Better as R.V.: **is** (or, **has become**) **a commandment of men which hath been taught**;—a human ordinance learned by rote (cf. Matt. xv. 1—9). This pregnant criticism expresses with epigrammatic force the fundamental difference between the pagan and the biblical conceptions of religion. Religion, being personal fellowship with God, cannot be "learned" from men, but only by revelation (Matt. xvi. 17).

14. Israel being thus hopelessly estranged from true knowledge of Jehovah, Jehovah must (and will) reveal His character in a way not to be misunderstood.

behold, I will proceed] The Hebr. has the same peculiar construction as in xxviii. 16.

to do a marvellous...wonder] Render: **to work wonderfully with this people,—wonderfully and wondrously** (cf. xxviii. 21).

the wisdom of their wise men (cf. Jer. xviii. 18) *shall perish*]—so far will the issue surpass human forethought.

shall be hid] **shall hide itself**, in shame and confusion.

CH. XXIX. 15—24. A MESSIANIC FORECAST.

The third "Woe" (v. 15), directed against the political intrigue with Egypt, merely serves as a point of attachment for a glowing description of the regenerated Israel. The course of thought is as follows:—

The prophet, having unmasked the designs of the conspirators, expostulates with them for pitting their foolish plans against the purpose of the Almighty (vv. 15, 16).

Ere long, Jehovah will prove His power by a marvellous transformation of nature and society; the word of the Lord will be received

- 15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide *their* counsel
from the LORD,
And their works are in the dark,
And they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?
- 16 Surely your turning *of things* upside down shall be
esteemed as the potter's clay:
For shall the work say of him that made it, He made
me not?
Or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it,
He had no understanding?
- 17 *Is* it not yet a very little while,
And Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?
- 18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the
book,

by the people, now deaf and dumb to spiritual things; the poor and oppressed shall rejoice in their God (vv. 17—19).

In that glorious age there shall be neither tyrant nor scoffer,—neither oppression from without, nor injustice within the state (vv. 20, 21).

The time of Israel's humiliation shall soon pass away, never to return; and those who at present are perplexed and discontented shall accept the instruction of true religion (vv. 22—24). *///*

15. Cf. xxx. 1, xxxi. 1. *that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD*] **that hide a plan deep from Jehovah.** The Egyptian party at court had done their utmost to conceal their project from Isaiah; this attempt to deceive God's prophet is an act of rebellion, an attempt to steal a march on Jehovah. That they had other reasons for working in the dark is no doubt true; but these were of small moment compared with the sin of refusing to Jehovah a voice in their counsels of state.

16. Shall the creature attempt to outwit the Creator?

Surely your turning...clay] Render as R.V. marg.: **O your perversity! Shall the potter be counted as clay?** "Is there no difference between maker and thing made?" On the image of the clay and the potter, cf. ch. xlv. 9, lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 6; Rom. ix. 21 ff.

17. The expressions here were perhaps proverbial; they are almost exactly repeated in ch. xxxii. 15.

yet a very little while] as in ch. x. 25 (cf. xvi. 14).

Lebanon is here a synonym for forest (see on ch. x. 34); it answers to "wilderness" (uncultivated pasture-land) in xxxii. 15.

a fruitful field] cf. x. 18.

18. *the words of the book*] There is a reference implied to vv. 11, 12. "Deafness" and "blindness" are metaphors for the spiritual obtuseness which at present characterises the nation (v. 10).

And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity,
and out of darkness.

The meek also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD, 19
And the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy
One of Israel.

For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the 20
scorner is consumed,

And all that watch for iniquity are cut off:

That make a man an offender for a word, 21

And lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate,

And turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, 22
concerning the house of Jacob,

19. The *meek* and *poor* (as in the Psalms) are the oppressed and down-trodden lower orders, as contrasted with the irreligious upper class (vv. 20 f.). They have now no hope but in Jehovah; then they shall **obtain fresh joy** in Him, because He has delivered them.

20. *the terrible one*] or "tyrant" probably denotes an external oppressor (the Assyrian); cf. xxv. 3, 4; *the scorner* is the despiser of religion (ch. xxviii. 14, 22; Ps. i. 1, &c.).

all that watch for iniquity] Perhaps "those who are wakefully intent upon plans of mischief" (Mic. ii. 1; Am. viii. 5). Some think the phrase is ironical, implying that those spoken of were appointed to watch over right, but betrayed their trust in the manner described in v. 21.

21. *That make a man an offender for a word*] The verb rendered "make an offender" usually means "lead into sin" (Ex. xxiii. 33; Eccles. v. 6, &c.); and is so understood in R.V. marg. "make men to offend by their words." Here, however, the second part of the verse seems to shew that it is used in a declarative sense (= "make a man out to be an offender"). *for a word* should be translated either **by a (false) word**; or (as R.V.) **in a cause**.

him that reproveth in the gate] (cf. Am. v. 10). The person indicated may be either a judge ("umpire," as Job ix. 33) or a private individual who stands up for justice in the place of public assembly.

turn aside the just (from his right, ch. x. 2; Am. v. 12) *for a thing of nought*] rather, as R.V. **with a thing of nought**, "on an empty pretext."

22. *who redeemed Abraham*] The clause is suspicious both from its position in the original, and from its contents. There is no incident in the biblical history of Abraham to which the expression "redeem" is specially appropriate; there is, however, a late Jewish legend about his being delivered from a fiery death prepared for him by his heathen relations (Book of Jubilees, ch. xii.). The words may be a late interpolation.

- Jacob shall not now be ashamed,
 Neither shall his face now wax pale.
 23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands,
 in the midst of him,
 They shall sanctify my name,
 And sanctify the Holy One of Jacob,
 And shall fear the God of Israel.
 24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to under-
 standing,
 And they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

not now] spoken from the standpoint of the ideal future.

23. *when he seeth his children, the work...*] R.V. marg. "when his children see the work" [lit. "when he (his children) shall see the work, &c."] Neither rendering is satisfactory, and "his children" should be omitted as a marginal gloss.

sanctify...fear] The same words are used in ch. viii. 13.

24. The meaning is that even the least capable and most refractory classes of the community shall willingly subject themselves to the teaching of revelation.

understanding and *doctrine* are words characteristic of the Hebrew Wisdom Literature (xxviii. 29).

CH. XXX. A SERIES OF ORACLES DEALING WITH THE EGYPTIAN ALLIANCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES; THE PRESENT STATE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF ISRAEL, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ASSYRIANS.

i. vv. 1—7. A "Woe" against the treaty with Egypt, which is here for the first time referred to in express terms. The Judæan embassy is already on its way across the terrible desert (6); and the prophet reiterates his warning against it as an enterprise contrary to Jehovah's will (1, 2) and based on an absurdly exaggerated estimate of the resources of Egypt (3—5, 7).

ii. vv. 8—17. Isaiah receives a command to record in writing his unavailing protest against this fatal step, now irrevocably taken (8). It is the crowning evidence of the rebellious disposition of the nation, its contempt for the organs of revelation, and antipathy to the holy rule of Jehovah (9—11). The disastrous consequences are then set forth by the help of an effective comparison (12—14); and finally the true and false policy for Israel are tersely summed up and contrasted and the issue of the choice that has been made is clearly indicated (15—17).

iii. vv. 18—26. A picture of the blessings reserved for the faithful remnant in the Messianic dispensation. The principal features are, a teachable disposition in the people (20, 21), the cessation of idolatry (22), and a miraculous transformation of the external aspect of nature (23—26). The passage is remarkably similar in character to ch. xxix. 15—24.

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, 30
That take counsel, but not of me;
And that cover *with* a covering, but not of my Spirit,
That *they* may add sin to sin:
That walk to go down *into* Egypt, 2
And have not asked *at* my mouth;
To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh,
And to trust in the shadow of Egypt.
Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, 3
And the trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion.
For his princes were at Zoan, 4

iv. vv. 27—33. The destruction of Assyria accomplished by a terrible display of Jehovah's might. Jehovah in person suddenly appears on the scene, not, as in iii. 14, to judge His own people, but to execute vengeance on their enemies (27, 28); the Israelites are but spectators of the great catastrophe and accompany its progress with songs of thanksgiving for their deliverance (29—32); while the remains of the Assyrian host are consumed on the vast funereal pyre which the prophet's imagination sees already prepared for their cremation (33).

1—5. The futile alliance with Egypt denounced. Comp. xxix. 15, xxxi. 1.

1. *Woe to the rebellious children*] See on i. 2, 4 and i. 23; cf. xxx. 9. The "sons" are "rebellious" inasmuch as they have taken this step without consulting Jehovah, their Father.

that take counsel] Rather, **that carry out a plan.**

that cover with a covering] R.V. gives in the margin two translations, between which it is difficult to choose: either **that weave a web** or **that pour out a drink-offering**. The latter is perhaps preferable, although the noun does not occur elsewhere with the sense of "libation" (see xxv. 7, xxviii. 20, "covering"). The allusion would be to drink-offerings accompanying the conclusion of a treaty (comp. *σπονδή*=libation with *σπονδαί*=covenant).

not of (with) my spirit] i.e. not in accordance with the spirit of prophecy speaking through Isaiah.

that they may add sin to sin] the sin of concealment to the original sin of dallying with secular alliances.

2. *and have not asked at my mouth*] "have not consulted my prophet" (for the expression cf. Josh. ix. 14; Gen. xxiv. 57).

to strengthen themselves...Egypt] Rather: **to take refuge in the refuge of Pharaoh, and to hide in the shadow of Egypt.**

3. *strengthen...trust*] **refuge...hiding**; as v. 2.

4, 5. *On Zoan*, see on ch. xix. 11. *Hanes* is identified with Herculopolis magna (Egyptian *Hnes*, still called *Ahnâs*), situated to the south of Memphis on an island in the Nile. Zoan and Hanes thus mark the extreme limits of Lower Egypt, which was at this time ruled by a number of petty potentates, amongst whom the prince of Sais held

And his ambassadors came to Hanes.

- 5 They were all ashamed of a people *that* could not profit them,
Nor be a help nor profit,
But a shame, and also a reproach.

- 6 The burden of the beasts of the south :
Into the land of trouble and anguish,

a kind of primacy and assumed the title of Pharaoh (*v.* 2 f.). If the "princes" and "ambassadors" are those of Judah, the meaning would be that the embassy would visit all the little courts of the Delta from North to South and meet with a discouraging reception. There are two objections to this interpretation, (1) Judah has not been mentioned in the preceding context and (2) Isaiah's contention appears to be, not that the Judæan overtures would be coldly received, but that the Egyptians would be ready enough to promise but slack in performance. It is more natural to suppose that the "his" refers to Pharaoh, in which case *v.* 4 must be read as the protasis to *v.* 5, the sense being "Great as the extent of the Pharaoh's sphere of influence may be, yet nothing but shame will come to those who trust in his help." Render thus: (4) **For though his (Pharaoh's) princes are in Zoan and his messengers reach to Hanes, (5) Yet all come to shame through a people of no profit to them, that brings no help and no profit but shame and also reproach.**

The reading "come to shame" is that of the Massoretic punctuation (Qêrê). The consonantal text (Kêthîb) has a much harsher word—"become stinking." The perfect is that of experience.

6, 7. These verses are marked as an independent oracle by a heading in the enigmatic style of those in ch. xxi., xxii. Some commentators regard the title as an editorial note which has crept into the text from the margin; but the substance of the oracle, which is a parallel to, rather than a continuation of, *vv.* 1—5, favours the supposition that it was originally distinct. From the analogy of xxi. 1, 13, xxii. 1, we should expect the superscription to be suggested by some striking phrase in the body of the prophecy. There is, however, nothing in the text as it stands to suggest "beasts of the south." "The south" means the Negeb, the desert region to the south of Judah, traversed by the Jewish ambassadors on their way to Egypt. The "beasts" might be either the beasts of burden painfully making their way through it (*v.* 6) or the wild animals by which it is haunted (*v.* 6). That the expression refers to the hippopotamus (Job xl. 15) as a symbol of Egypt is a hazardous speculation. The text is probably corrupt, and Duhm's suggestion that the title reproduces some lost words at the beginning of the oracle is probably on the right track, although his proposed reconstruction may not command assent.

6. *trouble and anguish*] Better perhaps **distress and hardship**, cf. Deut. viii. 15; Jer. ii. 6.

From whence *come* the young and old lion,
The viper and fiery flying serpent,
They will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young
asses,
And their treasures upon the bunches of camels,
To a people *that* shall not profit *them*.
For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose :
Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength
is to sit still.

Now go, write it before them in a table,
And note it in a book,

8

the young and old lion] R.V. **the lioness and the lion**. Hebrew (like Arabic) possesses a superfluity of synonyms for the lion.

fiery flying serpent] **winged Saraph**. See on vi. 2, xiv. 29; cf. Num. xxi. 6. These are some of the terrors braved by the Jewish envoys in the prosecution of their foolhardy enterprise.

they will carry (R.V. **they carry**) *their riches, &c.*] The ambassadors take with them a whole caravan of presents to the Egyptian courts.

7. *For the Egyptians...purpose*] Render **And as for Egypt—their help is vain and empty**. Cf. vv. 3, 5.

have I cried concerning this] Better, **have I called her** (R.V.).

Their strength is to sit still] R.V. **Rahab that sitteth still**, lit. "Rahab, they are a sitting still," or "Rahab are they, a sitting still." The sentence is almost hopelessly obscure. "Rahab" is the name of a mythological monster, a sea-dragon (ch. li. 9; Job ix. 13, xxvi. 12), which became a symbol of Egypt (Ps. lxxxvii. 4, lxxxix. 10), although that use may be based on this verse. Etymologically it signifies "insolent arrogance" (the root occurs in ch. iii. 5); and probably all three senses are combined in this instance. The general sense may be, "This proud boastful monster—its proper name is 'Inaction'."

8. What is it that Isaiah is here directed to commit to writing? According to Delitzsch, the contents of the short oracle, vv. 6, 7; according to others, merely the pithy sentence with which it closes. That is not impossible; the mention of a "tablet" indicates some short and striking inscription. But since a "book" is mentioned along with the tablet, it is probable that Isaiah at this time wrote down a summary of all his deliverances on the subject of the Egyptian alliance. Not improbably the "book" so prepared was the basis of the present collection of prophecies, ch. xxviii.—xxxii. The incident is closely parallel to that referred to in ch. viii. 16, where Isaiah prepares documentary evidence of his prophetic actions after his advice had been rejected by the court and people.

For *go* read **go in**—"retire to thy house."
note it should be **inscribe it** as R. V.

- That it may be for the time to come
 For ever and ever:
- 9 That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children,
 Children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD:
- 10 Which say to the seers, See not;
 And to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right *things*,
 Speak unto us smooth *things*,
 Prophecy deceits:
- 11 Get ye out of the way,
 Turn aside out of the path,
 Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.
- 12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel,
 Because ye despise this word,
 And trust in oppression and perverseness,

for the time to come for ever and ever] Render **for a future day for a witness** (R.V. marg.) **for ever**. The pointing has to be altered in accordance with most ancient versions.

9—11. The documents (as in viii. 16) are a protest against the persistent disobedience of the people. Render with R.V. **For it is, &c.**

9. *lying children*] or **faithless sons**; see on ch. i. 2, cf. Mal. i. 6.
the law] **the instruction**, as ch. i. 10.

10. *the seers*] (1 Sam. ix. 9.)

the prophets] The word rightly rendered "seer" in Am. vii. 12 and elsewhere. See on i. 1. The prophets referred to can hardly (in view of v. 11) be merely the false prophets, who were at the beck and call of the people, but all representatives of the prophetic office. Cf. Am. ii. 12, vii. 12; Hos. ix. 7, 8; Mic. ii. 6, 11, iii. 5, 11; Jer. vi. 14, xiv. 13 ff.; Ezek. xiii. 10 ff.

deceits] **illusions**; the word is used only here. It is Isaiah's own estimate that is put into the mouth of the people.

11. *Get ye out of the way, turn aside...*] i.e. "Discontinue your hackneyed methods: adopt a more conciliatory tone, and do not seek to influence us by reiterated prophecies of evil."

cause the Holy One of Israel to cease] The meaning is not, of course, that the people disown Jehovah as the national deity, but that they repudiate Isaiah's conception of Him as the Holy One of Israel, and the teaching based on that conception.

12—14. The answer of "Israel's Holy One," whose revelation is thus challenged.

12. *this word*] the warnings against the Egyptian alliance.

oppression and perverseness (lit. "crookedness")] The first word is explained of the oppressive war taxation necessitated by the policy now finally decided on; this is not altogether obvious, and some prefer, by transposing two consonants, to read "perverseness and crookedness." The same words are conjoined in Prov. ii. 15.

And stay thereon :

Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ¹³
ready to fall,

Swelling out in a high wall,

Whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' ¹⁴
vessel

That is broken in pieces ; he shall not spare :

So that there shall not be found in the bursting of it
a sheard

To take fire from the hearth,

Or to take water *withal* out of the pit.

For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel ; ¹⁵

In returning and rest shall ye be saved ;

In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength :

And ye would not.

But ye said, No ; for we will flee upon horses ; ¹⁶

Therefore shall ye flee :

13. Disaster will follow their policy with the necessity of a natural law. The best translation seems to be: **Therefore this guilt shall be to you as a rent descending** (lit. "falling") (and) **bulging out in a high wall, whose crash comes, &c.** The slight beginnings of transgression, its inevitable tendency to gravitate more and more from the moral perpendicular, till a critical point is reached, then the suddenness of the final catastrophe,—are vividly expressed by this magnificent simile. Comp. Ps. lxii. 3.

suddenly at an instant] Cf. ch. xxix. 5.

14. *he shall break it*] or: **it shall be broken.**

that is broken...spare] R.V. "breaking it in pieces without sparing"; better: **shivering it unsparingly** (Cheyne).

in the bursting of it] **among its fragments.** So completely will the Jewish state be shattered by the crooked policy of its leaders.

For *pit* read **cistern** (as R.V.).

15—17. The true policy contrasted with the false.

15 re-echoes the great ruling principle of Isaiah's statesmanship: comp. ch. vii. 4, 9, xxviii. 16. For *saith* read with R.V. **said.**

returning and rest...quietness and in confidence] The first expression describes the external policy, the second the attitude of mind, demanded by the occasion. On the one hand, averseness to war (Mic. ii. 8), renunciation of earthly help and a wise passivity in international affairs; on the other, calm reliance on Jehovah: in this last, the prophet says, they would have manifested the truest "strength" or courage.

16. *we will flee*] Translate: **we will fly** (against the enemy). The word, which in the next clause (as in every other instance) means "flee," is chosen because in Hebr. it resembles in sound the word for "horses."

- And, We will ride upon the swift;
Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.
17 One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one;
At the rebuke of five shall ye flee:
Till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain,
And as an ensign on a hill.
- 18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that *he* may be
gracious unto you,
And therefore will he be exalted, that *he* may have
mercy upon you:
For the LORD *is* a God of judgment:
Blessed *are* all they that wait for him.
- 19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem:
Thou shalt weep no more:
He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of
thy cry;
When *he* shall hear it, he will answer thee.

upon the swift] (coursers). In ch. xxxvi. 8 the Rabshakeh seems to taunt the Judæans with their childish fondness for horsemanship.

17. Their flight will be disgraceful. The words *at the rebuke of five* seem to weaken the force of the preceding hyperbole; hence some critics would insert "a myriad" in the second clause, after Lev. xxvi. 8; Deut. xxxii. 30.

beacon means "flag-staff" (elsewhere "mast"), cf. ch. xxxiii. 23.

18 is frequently explained as a concluding threat—"Therefore will the Lord wait before having mercy on you"; will postpone your deliverance. But this interpretation does violence to the terms of the verse, which is really the introduction of a new section, full of glorious promises. The "waiting" of Jehovah is that of anxious expectancy for the opportune moment of intervention; His "exaltation" denotes His readiness to act. The emendation "he will be silent" for "he will be exalted" is unnecessary. It is difficult, however, to explain the conjunction "therefore," after v. 17; unless we can hold that it has adversative force (= "even under these circumstances," "nevertheless"). The new passage seems to belong to a different time, and to continue another train of thought: see xxix. 15—24.

a God of judgment] or "justice."

that wait for him] Cf. ch. viii. 17; Ps. xxxiii. 20, &c.

19. The answer to prayer.

For the people shall dwell...] Rather For, O people in Zion that dwellest in Jerusalem.

thou shalt weep no more...gracious] weep thou shalt not, he will surely be gracious.

And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, ²⁰
and the water of affliction,
Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner
any more,
But thine eyes shall see thy teachers:
And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, ²¹
This *is* the way, walk ye in it,
When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to
the left.
Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images ²²
of silver,
And the ornament of thy molten images of gold:
Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth;
Thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.
Then shall he give the rain of thy seed,
That thou shalt sow the ground withal; ²³

20, 21. The restoration of religious privileges and instruction.

20. *the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction*] (cf. 1 Ki. xxii. 27) the most meagre necessities of existence. The reference is to the period of distress (perhaps the siege) which *precedes* the great deliverance.

shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner] Rather: **shall not thy Teacher (God) hide Himself**; (nearly as R.V. marg.). The alternative rendering "teachers" is no doubt possible, but the verb is in the singular, and the conception of Jehovah as the personal teacher of His people, although surprising, gives the fullest meaning to the expressions of this verse and the next, and is not too exalted for a description of the Messianic age. If the other view be adopted, the reference must be to the prophets, who are now driven into concealment, but shall then freely appear in public. But such an anticipation has no parallel in Messianic prophecy, and certainly receives no light from the circumstances of Isaiah's time.

21. *thine ears shall hear a word behind thee*] that of Jehovah, walking like a Father behind His children. Cf. xxix. 18.

22. The renunciation of idolatry.

Ye shall defile] i.e. "desecrate" (2 Ki. xxiii. 8 ff.).
covering...ornament] **Overlaying...plating**, as R.V. An idol consisted of a core of wood or inferior metal, overlaid with a costly layer of silver or gold. The latter part was of course the most valuable, and perhaps also the most sacred (see Deut. vii. 25 f.).

cast them away, &c.] **scatter them as an unclean thing**; Ex. xxxii. 20.

23—26. The temporal blessings of the new dispensation.

23. *the rain of thy seed*] the "early rain" falling in the month of October.

- And bread of the increase of the earth,
 And it shall be fat and plenteous:
 In that day shall thy cattle feed *in* large pastures.
 24 The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the
 ground
 Shall eat clean provender,
 Which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with
 the fan.
 25 And there shall be upon every high mountain,
 And upon every high hill,
 Rivers *and* streams of waters in the day of the great
 slaughter,
 When the towers fall.
 26 Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light
 of the sun,
 And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold,
 As the light of seven days,
 In the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of
 his people,

bread of the increase of the earth] Perhaps: "bread-corn (xxviii. 28) the produce of the ground." Cf. ch. xxxvii. 30.

24. Comp. Paul's "Doth God take care for oxen?" (I Cor. ix. 9). *that ear*] (the obsolete English word for "plough"), strictly *till*, R.V. *clean provender*] **salted fodder**, i.e. the best fodder (Job vi. 5) mixed with grains of salt. The devotion of cattle to salt in any form is well known. Gesenius quotes an Arabic proverb which says that "sweet fodder is the camel's bread, salted fodder is his comfit." The word for "fodder" (*bēlil*) is usually explained as "mixture" (*farrago*) of corn with beans, vetches, &c. According to Wetzstein (in Delitzsch's *Comm.* on this verse) it means "ripe barley." In Syriac it denotes "fresh corn."

winnowed with the shovel and with the fan] i.e. prepared with the utmost care. The modern Arabic equivalent of the word rendered "fan" denotes a six-pronged fork (Wetzstein, in Delitzsch's *Isaiah*, 2nd ed.). As to the process see on ch. xvii. 13.

25. Even the arid slopes of the hills of Palestine shall then flow with water.

slaughter, when the towers fall] cf. ch. ii. 12 ff. It is a vague poetic allusion to the day of the Lord, when all His enemies are destroyed.

26. *moon and sun* are, in the original, poetic epithets (see on xxiv. 23).

as the light of seven days] the light of a whole week concentrated in one day. But the clause is wanting in the LXX., and being redundant is probably a late gloss.

And healeth the stroke of their wound.

Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, 27
 Burning *with* his anger, and the burden *thereof* is
 heavy:

His lips are full of indignation,
 And his tongue as a devouring fire:
 And his breath, as an overflowing stream, 28
 Shall reach to the midst of the neck,
 To sift the nations with the sieve of vanity:
 And *there shall be* a bridle in the jaws of the people,
 causing *them* to err.

Ye shall have a song, as *in* the night when a holy 29
 solemnity is kept;

bindeth up the breach...wound] Cf. ch. i. 6.

27, 28. These verses describe the Theophany, in which Jehovah appears to destroy the Assyrians, cf. Jud. v. 4, 5; Ps. xviii. 7 ff. l. 3—5.

27. *the name of the LORD*] appears here to be synonymous with what is elsewhere called the "glory of Jehovah" (cf. the parallelism, ch. lix. 19; Ps. cii. 15) i.e. the visible manifestation of His presence. It may have the same sense in ch. xviii. 7, the Temple of the future being conceived as the scene of a perpetual Theophany (Ezek. xliii. 2 ff.). Amongst the later Jews the expression "the Name" was commonly used, out of reverence, to avoid the use of Jehovah (cf. Lev. xxiv. 11).

cometh from far] In Jud. v. 4; Deut. xxxiii. 2, the Theophany comes from Seir or Sinai; here its origin is left indefinite. Jehovah's coming is like that of the thundercloud which appears on the distant horizon, no eye having observed the mysterious process by which it was formed. In what follows the figure of the storm is inseparably blended with an anthropomorphic representation of Jehovah.

and the burden thereof is heavy] Render: **and with thick uplifting (of smoke)** (Cheyne). R.V. "in thick rising smoke." Cf. Jud. xx. 38. *full of indignation*] Perhaps "full of angry foam."

28. Render with R.V. **and his breath is as an overflowing stream that reacheth** (lit. "divideth") **even unto the neck**, &c. (cf. ch. viii. 8). *to sift* (lit. "swing") [*the*] *nations with the sieve of vanity* (or "ruin") i.e. to sift them until they are annihilated.

and there shall be a bridle...err] Better: **and (he shall be) a bridle that causeth to err, in the jaws of peoples**; i.e. Jehovah by His providence, turns the Assyrians aside from their purpose, and frustrates their enterprise.

29—32. Songs of rejoicing arise within the city, while the Assyrians are slaughtered under its walls.

29. *Ye shall have a song*] lit. "the song shall be to you." Undoubtedly, the song is sung by the Israelites, not by an angelic choir, as is strangely suggested by Duham. The song will be like that **in the**

And gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe
To come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty
One of Israel.

30 And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard,
And shall shew the lighting down of his arm,
With the indignation of *his* anger,
And *with* the flame of a devouring fire,
With scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.

31 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian
be beaten down,
Which smote with a rod.

32 And *in* every *place* where the grounded staff shall pass,
Which the LORD shall lay upon him,
It shall be with tabrets and harps:
And in battles of shaking will he fight with it.

night when a feast is hallowed (R.V. marg.). The feast is probably the Passover, the only festival which, so far as we know, included a nocturnal ceremony, in the O.T. times. That singing then formed a part of the ritual (as in the time of Christ: Matt. xxvi. 30), cannot be proved, but it is not unlikely that this was the case. The reason why this particular festival is selected for comparison may be that it commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. It is thought by many that the "Song of Moses," Ex. xv., was used as a Paschal hymn.

as when one goeth with a pipe] Or: **like his who marches with a flute**, &c. (cf. 1 Ki. i. 40); in other words, "who takes part in a festal procession to the Temple."

the mighty One of Israel] **the Rock of Israel** (R.V.), 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

30. *his glorious voice*] Perhaps: **the majesty of His thunder** (Ps. xxix. 3 ff.).

the lighting down] The word probably comes from the (Aramaic) verb used in Ps. xxxviii. 2. It may, however, be derived from the verb "to rest," the causative of which is rendered "lay upon" in v. 32.

with the indignation of his anger] **with furious anger**.

scattering] **R.V. a blast**. The word does not occur elsewhere; it is probably a poetic name for a storm.

For *tempest* read **rain storm**.

31. Assyria is here named for the first time as the object of the judgment. The *voice* of Jehovah is the thunder, as in v. 30. For *beaten down* render **panic-stricken**.

which smote with a rod] (cf. ch. x. 24) Or "when He (Jehovah) smites with the rod."

32. The verse may be translated as in R.V. **And every stroke of the appointed staff which the Lord shall lay upon him shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of shaking will he fight with them**. The expression "grounded staff" is, however, barely intelli-

For Tophet *is* ordained of old ;
 Yea, for the king it is prepared ;
 He hath made *it* deep *and* large :
 The pile thereof *is* fire and much wood ;
 The breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone,
 doth kindle it.

gible; the emendation "staff of correction" (Prov. xxii. 15) only replaces one singular expression by another, and is besides too easy to be worth much. The phrase "battles of shaking" is also difficult. "Battles of the swinging (of Jehovah's rod)" is the construction usually put upon it, but the sense is rhetorically weak. The word for "shaking" is the technical term for the "wave offering" in the Law (e.g. Lev. vii. 30); hence Ewald renders "battles of wave-offering," i.e. battles in which Assyria is devoted to destruction.

33. *For Tophet is ordained of old*] Render: **For a burning-place is already laid out.** Tophet is the name of a spot in the valley of the son of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where human sacrifices were offered to the god Melek or Molek (2 Kings xxiii. 10; Jer. vii. 31 f., xix. 6, 13). According to Prof. Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, p. 377) the word was originally pronounced *Tēphath*, and, like its equivalents in Aramaic and Arabic, meant simply "fireplace." This view seems preferable to the common derivation, which explains it as a term of contempt ("spitting" Job xvii. 6); and it accounts for the generic sense which the word undoubtedly has in this passage (where, however, a bye-form *tophteh* is used). "The Tophet" was so-called because the most distinctive feature of the revolting rites there practised was the burning of the victims in a great pit dug in the ground, which constituted the "fireplace."

yea, for the king it is prepared] lit. "even it is prepared for the king" (not "even for the king it is prepared"). The "king" might be either the king of Assyria, or the god "Melek" (Molech), or a play of words alluding to both. But a "witty allusion" in such a passage leads us to suspect the hand of a glossator. The objection to understanding it of the king of Assyria is that the emphasis rests on "it" and not on "the king."

the pile thereof] Cf. Ezek. xxiv. 9. For "fire" some other word must have been used; perhaps "coals of fire" (נְחִילִים omitted before עֵשֶׂת).

CH. XXXI. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF HUMAN HELP: THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE PROTECTION.

The alliance with Egypt (now apparently consummated) is again the starting point of this fifth "Woe." As in ch. xxix. 5—7, there is some uncertainty as to where the transition from denunciation to promise takes place; but the best division seems to be as follows:—

i. vv. 1—4. The false confidence of the politicians in the strength of Egypt (1) is rebuked by an appeal to the infinite contrast between

- 31 Woe to them that go down *to* Egypt for help ;
 And stay on horses,
 And trust in chariots, because *they are* many ;
 And in horsemen, because they are very strong ;
 But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,
 Neither seek the LORD.
- 2 Yet he also *is* wise, and will bring evil,
 And will not call back his words :
 But will arise against the house of the evildoers,
 And against the help of them that work iniquity.
- 3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God ;
 And their horses flesh, and not spirit.

the wisdom and resources of the Almighty and all human craft and power (2, 3). In a very striking figure the prophet represents Jerusalem as the helpless prey in the grasp of Jehovah, and shews how impossible it is that any earthly power should intervene for its deliverance (4).

ii. vv. 5—9. Yet Jehovah will protect and spare Jerusalem (5). If Israel would but repent and turn to Him whom they have forsaken, Who alone is God, able to save them! (6, 7). The Assyrian shall be destroyed by Jehovah's personal intervention (8, 9). //

1. Woe to them that put their trust in the horses and chariots of Egypt! The Jews were painfully conscious of their weakness in cavalry as compared with the Assyrians, and this was one of the considerations that made a league with Egypt so attractive in their eyes (see ch. xxx. 16, xxxvi. 8, 9). Egypt was always renowned in antiquity for its strength in this arm (Hom. *Iliad* ix. 383; Diodorus, i. 45). To the prophets horses and chariots were in themselves objectionable as embodiments of irreligious militarism (cf. ch. ii. 7); they were of course doubly so when obtained through compacts with foreign states.

neither seek the LORD] i.e. seek His counsel (xxx. 2).

2, 3. A demonstration of the folly of trusting Egypt rather than Jehovah.

2. *Yet he also is wise*] as well as the shrewd diplomatists who have negotiated this treaty! The words are ironical, yet they have a serious meaning; the prophet, alone in his view of the political situation, reassures himself by thinking of the transcendent wisdom of Jehovah and the fixity of His purpose.

and will bring evil] Rather, **brings trouble** (cf. Am. iii. 6) in consequence of His wisdom.

and will not call back (better: **and hath not recalled**) *his words*] The "words" are such prophecies as xxviii. 16 ff., xxix. 14 ff., xxx. 13 f., 16 ff.

the house of [the] evildoers is Judah (ch. i. 4); their *help* (i.e. "helpers") is Egypt.

3. *men, and not God...flesh, and not spirit*] In these antitheses Isaiah formulates his religious conception of history. The present

When the LORD shall stretch out his hand,
Both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen
shall fall down,

And they all shall fail together.

For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me,

Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his
prey,

When a multitude of shepherds is called forth against
him,

He will not be afraid of their voice,

Nor abase himself for the noise of them:

So shall the LORD of hosts come down

crisis has not been brought about by the mere collision of earthly forces (Egypt, Assyria, Judah); faith discerns in it the operation of a spiritual principle, and knows that that principle must be victorious. "Spirit" is the energetic indestructible element in the universe, by which all life is sustained; and that which is distinctive of the teaching of Isaiah and the prophets generally is (1) the identification of this principle with the moral purpose of Jehovah, and (2) the assertion of the supremacy of the spiritual, thus ethically conceived, over the material. That men could not stand against God, or flesh against spirit, Isaiah's contemporaries did not need to be taught; what separated him from his hearers was the conviction that there is but one Divine Person, and one spiritual power in the universe, viz.: Jehovah and His moral government as revealed in the consciousness of the prophet. Hence he continues:—**And Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, and the helper (Egypt) shall stumble and the holpen (Judah) shall fall; and together they shall all of them perish.**

4. The verse reads: **As the lion growls, and the young lion over his prey, against whom the whole band of shepherds has been called out—he is not terrified by their cry, nor dismayed at their shouting—so Jehovah of Hosts will come down, &c.** Compare with this truly Homeric simile *Il.* XVIII. 161 f., XII. 299 ff. It is unfortunate that so graphic an image should be thought capable of two diametrically opposite interpretations. According to many commentators it expresses Jehovah's determination to defend Jerusalem against the Assyrians. But the figure would certainly be "ill-chosen" if the lion were represented as protecting his prey and the shepherds as anxious to destroy it. The only natural construction is that Jehovah (through the Assyrians, as in xxix. 3, 4) will hold Jerusalem helpless in His power as the lion holds his prey; though the noisy crowd of shepherds (the Egyptians) try to scare him away. The only advantage of the other view is that the transition from threatening to promise would be somewhat less abrupt at the beginning of v. 4 than at the beginning of v. 5; but that is not a sufficient reason for straining the figure in the way proposed.

- To fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.
 5 As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend
 Jerusalem;
 Defending also he will deliver *it*;
 And passing over he will preserve *it*.
- 6 Turn ye unto *him from* whom the children of Israel
 have deeply revolted.
- 7 For in that day every man shall cast away
 His idols of silver, and his idols of gold,
 Which your own hands have made unto you *for* a sin.
- 8 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a
 mighty man;
 And the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him:
 But he shall flee from the sword,

to fight for mount Zion, and for] Render: **to fight against...and against**, as in every other case where the phrase occurs (ch. xxix. 7, 8; Num. xxxi. 7; Zech. xiv. 12). The translation "upon mount Zion and upon" is only adopted in order to maintain the favourable construction of the verse.

5. Jehovah's protection of Jerusalem is expressed by a very different figure—that of birds hovering over their nests. The word for *birds* denotes especially small, sparrow-like, birds; and its use here might seem less appropriate than in Ps. xi. 1 as a synonym for timidity. It is, however, frequently used of birds in general (e.g. Ps. viii. 8).

passing over] The verb is that from which the word *Pesah* (Passover) is derived; it occurs again only in Ex. xii. 13, 23, 27. For *preserve* read **rescue**.

6 contains the only summons to repentance in this whole series of discourses. It must not be understood as implying that the deliverance of Jerusalem is conditional upon a national repentance. The verse is connected with v. 7; and the thought is that the approaching deliverance will be a decisive manifestation of the sole deity of Jehovah, which will put idolatry to shame; and therefore the prophet calls on his hearers to realise the magnitude of their sin in having forsaken the one true God.

have deeply revolted] cf. i. 5. In spite of the change from second to third person (cf. i. 29, v. 8), the words *children of Israel* should probably be translated as a vocative.

7. Comp. xxx. 22, xvii. 8, ii. 8 and esp. ii. 20.

8, 9. The discomfiture of the Assyrians will be accomplished by Jehovah Himself. The connexion with what precedes is not very close.

8. *not of a mighty man...mean man*] R.V. **not of man...men** (see on ch. ii. 9). Lit. "of a Not-man...Not-mortal," i.e. a superhuman sword.

And his young men shall be discomfited.
 And he shall pass over *to* his strong hold for fear, 9
 And his princes shall be afraid of the ensign,
 Saith the LORD, whose fire *is* in Zion,
 And his furnace in Jerusalem.

shall be discomfited] R.V. **shall become tributary**, "be subjected to bond-service," as 1 Kings ix. 21 f., &c.

9. *he shall pass over to his strong hold*] The clause is difficult. R.V. and A.V. marg. take "his Rock" as subj., "Rock" being a figurative designation either of the king of Assyria or its national deity. This view has nothing to commend it. The A.V. gives a good sense, but a better translation perhaps is: "he shall overpass his rock(-refuge) from terror," the image being that of a hunted animal, which misses its accustomed hiding-place in its fright.

his princes shall be afraid of the ensign] This rendering might be explained by ch. xviii. 3: the Assyrian officers shall be affrighted at the signal which Jehovah sets up. A better rendering, however, is: **his officers shall be frightened away from the standard**, i.e. "even the officers shall desert the standard in panic" (a pregnant construction).

whose fire is...Jerusalem] Better: **who hath a fire in Zion and a furnace** (lit. "oven") **in Jerusalem**. There is perhaps an allusion here to the meaning of "Ariel" in ch. xxix. 1 ff. The expressions symbolise the two aspects of Jehovah's presence in Zion, light to His friends and destruction to His enemies (as Ex. xiv. 20). The "oven" is an emblem of the Divine anger in Ps. xxi. 9; perhaps also in Gen. xv. 17.

CH. XXXII. 1—8. THE IDEAL COMMONWEALTH OF THE MESSIANIC AGE.

This passage, although treated by many expositors as the continuation of ch. xxxi., bears all the marks of an independent prophecy. Its insertion in the present group of discourses is sufficiently explained by the picture it gives of a reformed upper class, in contrast with the irreligious and unscrupulous nobility against whom the previous chapters have been mainly directed. The time of its actual composition cannot be determined with certainty, but it is perhaps most naturally assigned to the close of Isaiah's ministry, when his mind was occupied with the hope of the ideal future. Much has been made of the fact that the figure of the Messianic King (v. 1) is less idealised than in the great prophecies of ch. ix. 1—6 and xi. 1—4. But this circumstance is easily accounted for by the leading idea of the prophecy (which is the transformation of social relationships), and cannot be safely used as a criterion of date. Still less does it furnish an argument against the Isaianic authorship of the passage. It is true, however, that in its somewhat laboured didactic style, and in the terms employed, the passage differs widely from anything else in the acknowledged writings of Isaiah; and the suggestion that it may have owed its final literary form to a later hand cannot be altogether ignored.

- 32 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness,
And princes shall rule in judgment.
2 And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind,
And a covert from the tempest;
As rivers of water in a dry place,
As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.
3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim,
And the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

The contents of the prophecy are as follows:—

(1) vv. 1, 2. A perfectly just and beneficent government will be established; king and nobles alike being endowed with the virtues necessary for their office, and yielding protection to the poor.

(2) vv. 3, 4. Public opinion also will be enlightened and purified; the people will no longer be misled by false and superficial judgments, but even the most ignorant will be gifted with the faculty of sound moral discernment.

(3) vv. 5—8. The consequences of this will be that "the aristocracy of birth and wealth will be replaced by an aristocracy of character" (Delitzsch); men will find their proper level and be estimated at their true worth (5). To this is appended an analysis of the two contrasted types, the "churl" and the true nobleman (6—8).

1, 2. It is characteristic of Isaiah that the renovation of society is represented as commencing at the top, with the king and aristocracy. (Cf. ch. i. 26, iii. 1—7.) The ideal king has already been described (ch. ix. 6, 7, xi. 1—4) as supernaturally endowed with the virtues of a perfect ruler; here the emphasis lies on the manifestation of these qualities in righteous government; and this, according to the constitutional principles of Isaiah's time, required an order of state officials animated by the same spirit as the king himself.

1. *and princes shall rule*] Some render emphatically: "and as for princes—they shall rule," on account of a preposition in the Hebr.; but this is probably only a copyist's error. On "righteousness" and "judgment," see ch. i. 21; cf. xi. 4, 5.

2. For *a man* read *each one* (of the princes). The meaning of the figure is that every great man, instead of being a tyrant and oppressor of the poor (xxix. 20 f.), shall be a protection against calamity and a source of beneficent activity.

from the tempest] *from the rain storm*; cf. ch. iv. 6.

the shadow of a great (lit. "heavy") *rock*] cooler than that of a tree. Frequently cited parallels (since Gesenius) are the *σκῆπηραῖν* of Hesiod (*Works*, 589) and the "saxea umbra" of Vergil (*Georg.* III. 145).

3, 4. The quickening of the moral perceptions of the people. Comp. ch. xxix. 18, 24, xxx. 20 f.

3. *shall not be dim*] *shall not be closed* (R.V. marg.). The verb, although disguised in the pointing, is no doubt the same as that used in ch. vi. 10, xxix. 10 (lit. "smear"). The curse there pronounced shall be removed.

The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, 4
And the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to
speak plainly.

The vile person shall be no more called liberal, 5
Nor the churl said *to be* bountiful.

For the vile person will speak villany, 6
And his heart will work iniquity,

To practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the
LORD,

To make empty the soul of the hungry,
And he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

The instruments also of the churl *are* evil: 7

He deviseth wicked devices

To destroy the poor with lying words,
Even when the needy speaketh right.

4. *the rash*] i.e. the hasty, inconsiderate person, who constantly blurts out crude and ill-judged opinions. The *stammerers*, on the other hand, are those who, even when their thoughts are right, lack the gift of clear utterance. To the former class is promised "understanding," to the latter the power to speak promptly and "plainly" (lit. *lucidities*). Sound judgment and fluent speech combine to form a good popular orator.

5. True and false nobility shall no longer be confounded because of artificial caste-distinctions.

The vile person] or, *the fool*; see the typical specimen, Nabal by name and by nature, in 1 Sam. xxv.

liberal] Better: *noble* (in rank). The word denotes, first, one of generous, self-sacrificing disposition; and then one of noble degree; Num. xxi. 18 and often.

The word rendered *churl* occurs only here (and v. 7), and its meaning is uncertain. The view adopted by most commentators derives it from a root signifying guile or craftiness (hence Cheyne well renders *knave*). *bountiful* represents another rare word (only Job xxxiv. 19 [E.V. "rich"]), perhaps *man of substance*.

6-8. The two types contrasted in their conduct.

6. The characteristics of the "fool." Render: **For a fool speaks folly and his heart works** (LXX. "meditates") **mischief, to practise impiety** (cf. ix. 17) **and to speak error** (xxix. 24) **against Jehovah, &c.** The fool here depicted is a free thinker, a practical atheist, as in Ps. xiv. 1; the baneful effect of his principles is seen in his conduct towards his fellow-men, in his pitiless and cruel selfishness.

to make empty...] to deprive the destitute of their scanty subsistence.

7. *The instruments*] i.e. the weapons or methods, of the knave. The word is chosen because of its close similarity to that for "knave" (*kēlai* — *kēlāw*). On these machinations of the knave, see ch. xxix. 21.

even when the needy speaketh right] in a forensic sense (= "speaks with right on his side").

- 8 But the liberal deviseth liberal *things*;
And by liberal *things* shall he stand.

8. *But the liberal (the noble man) deviseth liberal (noble) things—*and thereby evinces genuine nobility.

by liberal things...] Better: **in noble things doth he continue** (nearly as R.V.). His generous impulses are sustained in his conduct.

4 CH. XXXII. 9—20. TO THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM. //

Like the previous sections (xxix. 1 ff., 15 ff., xxx., xxxi.) this passage is divided into two parts,—the announcement of judgment on Jerusalem, and a description of the Messianic salvation (see the analysis below). It presents, however, two remarkable peculiarities: (1) there is no reference to the overthrow of the Assyrians, and (2) it contemplates a complete destruction of Jerusalem and a protracted desolation of the land. For these reasons some critics have been led to assign the prophecy to a period much earlier than the invasion of Sennacherib; and this would be plausible if it were possible to separate the two parts of which it is composed (9—14 and 15—20). But this is difficult on account of the close connexion established by v. 15; and since the latter portion presents some literary affinities with the other members of this group of discourses (ch. xxviii.—xxxi.) it will probably be safer to regard the whole as belonging to the same period. It is possible, no doubt, that the Messianic conclusion might have been written later than the address to the women; but even on that assumption we should have to admit that the prophet retained the conception of an indefinitely prolonged depopulation of the land, at a late stage of his career.

The contents of the prophecy are as follows:—

i. vv. 9—14. A threatening oration, addressed to the women of Jerusalem. The introduction (v. 9) shews that what roused the ire of the prophet was the careless unconcern and indifference of the women in face of the reiterated warnings he had uttered. He endeavours to shake them out of their light-hearted security by the announcement that “the ingathering shall not come” (10). So clear is the vision of calamity that he calls on his hearers to adopt the attitude of mourners over the ravaged vineyards, the desolate fields, and the deserted palaces of the “*jubilant city*” (11—14).

ii. vv. 15—20. Out of this state of collapse and ruin there will ultimately arise, but after an indefinite period, a new world. Under the vivifying influence of the Divine spirit, external nature will be renewed (15), righteousness will dwell in the land (16), and its blessed fruits will be undisturbed peace and security (17, 18). An unexpected allusion to the judgment (19) somewhat mars the continuity of the passage, which ends with a prophetic felicitation of the peaceful and industrious peasantry who inherit the golden age (20). //

9. The women are addressed partly as representing best certain aspects of the public mind, luxury and complacent ease (ch. iii. 16 ff.; Am. iv. 1 ff.); partly because of their function as mourners in seasons of calamity (Jer. ix. 20).

Rise up, ye women that are at ease, hear my voice; 9
Ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech.
Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless 10
women:

For the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.
Tremble, ye *women* that are at ease; be troubled, ye 11
careless ones:

Strip ye, and make ye bare, and gird *sackcloth* upon
your loins.

They *shall* lament for the teats,

12

that are at ease...careless] (or, **confident**) cf. Am. vi. 1.

10. *Many days and years*] The Hebr. reads literally "days beyond a year," probably a current popular phrase like "year and day." Both A.V. and R.V. regard the expression as accus. of duration, but the context shews that it fixes the point of time when ease and security give place to anxiety. The meaning is "in little more than a year." Comp. the less definite note of time in ch. xxix. 1.

The feature of the judgment which is emphasised is the failure of the vintage and the fruit harvest (*gathering*); what follows shews that this is not the result of natural causes, but of a wholesale devastation of the land. The significance of the prediction would depend greatly on the season of the year at which it was uttered; on any natural interpretation of his words, the prophet means to assert that the next year's harvest will never be gathered.

11. The speaker calls on his female auditors at once to assume the garb of mourners; so certain is the calamity. The word for "tremble" is in the masc. gender in the original, a not uncommon irregularity (Am. iv. 1; Mic. i. 13, &c.). Indeed the next verse presents an example.

strip ye, and make ye bare—as Arabian women occasionally do in a paroxysm of grief or terror.

gird (sc. *sackcloth*) *upon your loins*] Cf. ch. iii. 24; 1 Ki. xxi. 27; 2 Ki. vi. 30; Job xvi. 15.

The words "be troubled," "strip," "make bare" and "gird" represent anomalous forms in the Hebrew, which are the despair of grammarians. The imperative no doubt gives the right sense.

12. *They shall lament for the teats*] R.V. gives a better translation: **they shall smite upon the breasts**; but the construction is difficult. The verb is a masculine plural participle and signifies strictly "to mourn." The word for "breasts" might by a slight change of points be read as "fields"; hence some commentators think that the reference to the women is here abandoned, and render, "men shall mourn for the fields." If the R.V. is right we must suppose that the word "mourn" (like the Greek *κόπτεσθαι*) meant originally "smite upon (the breast)" and is here used in its literal sense. The clause would be somewhat more easily construed if read as the conclusion of v. 11 (Duhm, "smiting

- For the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.
 13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns *and*
 briers;
 Yea, upon all the houses of joy *in* the joyous city:
 14 Because the palaces shall be forsaken;
 The multitude of the city shall be left;
 The forts and towers shall be for dens for ever,
 A joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;
 15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high,
 And the wilderness be a fruitful field,
 And the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

on the breasts"), but even with this change the masculine gender is exceedingly harsh.

13. *Upon the land...briers*] It is perhaps better to take this as continuing *v.* 12, rendering thus: **For the (cultivated) land of my people, which goes up in thorns and briers** (cf. ch. v. 6); **yea, for all, &c.** (The verb "goes up" is fem. and must have as its subj. the fem. "land"; "thorns" and "briers" are masc.)

the joyous city] (see on ch. xxii. 2) may be a genitive depending on "houses," or may be a parallel phrase, governed by "for."

14. Render: **For the palace is forsaken, the tumult of the city is a solitude** (as in ch. vi. 12), &c. The tenses are prophetic perfects.

the forts and towers] Better as in R.V.: **the hill and the watch tower.** The first word is *Ophel*, the name of the southern projection of the hill on which the temple stood (Neh. iii. 26 f., xi. 21; 2 Chr. xxvii. 3, xxxiii. 14), and is doubtless mentioned as the aristocratic quarter of the city, near the royal palace. The word translated "watch tower" occurs nowhere else, and is of uncertain significance; probably, like *Ophel*, it denotes a particular locality in the capital.

The phrase *for ever* must be understood in a relative sense, being restricted by the "until" of *v.* 15.

The verse contains an absolute and explicit prediction of the complete overthrow of Jerusalem. Dillmann's assertion that such an expectation must have been expressed in different language is inexplicable, and his distinction between destruction and desolation is sophistical. Surprising as this idea may be alongside of certain passages in this section of the book, it is not to be explained away, and after all it does not go very much beyond what is said in ch. xxix. 4. For a complete parallel, however, we must go back to the early prophecy of ch. v. 14, 17.

15. At last the great transformation of all things will be ushered in, by an outpouring of *spirit* (the Heb. has no art.) *from on high*; i.e. from heaven, as in ch. xxxiii. 5. The spirit, conceived as a subtle essence descending upon and then permeating the human world, is said to be "poured out" as in ch. xxix. 10; Ezek. xxxix. 29; Joel ii. 28 f. (although different verbs are there used). Any supernatural influence, even when acting to the injury of man, might be so spoken of (ch. xix. 14,

Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, 16
And righteousness remain in the fruitful field.
And the work of righteousness shall be peace; 17
And the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance
for ever.
And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, 18
And in sure dwellings,
And in quiet resting places;
When it shall hail, coming down *on* the forest; 19
And the city shall be low in a low place.
Blessed *are* ye that sow beside all waters, 20
That send forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the ass.

xxix. 10), just as a personal "spirit from Jehovah" may be evil or false (1 Sam. xvi. 14; 1 Ki. xxii. 21 ff.). Here the word is used absolutely and denotes the Divine principle of life, and especially the power by which the will of God is made to prevail in human society (vv. 16 f.).

On the second half of the verse see ch. xxix. 17.

16. "Judgment" and "righteousness," the foundations of social order (ch. i. 21, 26 f., xxviii. 17), shall then be established throughout the land. The "wilderness" (i.e. untilled pasture-land) is not annihilated, only pushed further into the desert proper; even there the reign of right extends.

17, 18. The consequence of this supremacy of righteousness is universal tranquillity and security,—a contrast to the false carnal security denounced in vv. 9, 11.

17. *work* and *effect* are synonyms; both mean literally "work," and both have the sense of "effect" (the latter only here used in this sense). [*quietness and assurance*] (R.V. *confidence*) cf. ch. xxx. 15.

19. The verse reads: **And it shall hail at the falling of the forest, and in lowliness shall the city be laid low.** According to most commentators the "forest" is a symbol for Assyria, as in ch. x. 18 f., 33 f. But this is suggested by nothing in the context, and the "city" in the next line cannot be Nineveh, which is never referred to by Isaiah, and is far from his thoughts here. The verse as a whole must (if genuine) be taken as an announcement of judgment on Jerusalem; but it comes in so awkwardly between vv. 18 and 20, that it may not unreasonably be regarded as an interpolation. On the "hail" as a synonym for Divine judgment see ch. xxviii. 2, 17, xxx. 30.

20. The prophet apostrophises the happy agricultural population of the renovated land of Israel. The sentiment may be in part due to his own delight in the avocations of the husbandman, but it has to be remembered that agricultural prosperity naturally holds a prominent place in Messianic prophecy, as the antithesis to the false refinements and military pomp of the civilisation that is to be swept away. The

- 33 Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled;
 And dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacher-
 ously with thee!
 When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled;

features of the description are, the happiness of the people, the abundance of water for the irrigation of the fields, and immunity from danger, so that "the ox and the ass" can be safely driven out to pasture, without fear of their not returning (cf. ch. i. 3). The "thither" of the A.V. is a misleading insertion.

1/ CH. XXXIII. THE PRESENT DISTRESS AND THE FUTURE GLORY OF JERUSALEM.

The last of the six "Woes" (see p. 206) is not addressed, like the others, to the ungodly rulers of Judah, but to some unnamed tyrant and "spoiler," by whom the land has been reduced to the utmost straits. The course of thought is as follows:

i. vv. 1—13 contain the prophet's appeal to Jehovah against the oppressors of his country. Commencing with a threat of retribution on the cruel and treacherous foe (v. 1), he turns for a moment in supplication to God, the only hope of Israel in this time of trouble (v. 2); and anticipates the speedy dispersion of the enemy before the presence of Jehovah (3, 4), Who has filled Zion with righteousness and judgment (5, 6).—At present the city is in the utmost distress through some perfidious act of the enemy; and the whole land lies waste, mourning in sympathy with its inhabitants (7—9).—But again the prophet's faith rises triumphant in the midst of danger; the voice of Jehovah is heard announcing the swift annihilation of the invaders (10—13).

ii. vv. 14—16. The effect of Jehovah's appearing on the two classes within the community; on the ungodly, who are seized with terror (14), and the righteous who dwell securely with the consuming fire of Divine holiness (15, 16).

iii. vv. 17—24. The poem concludes with a picture of the coming age, when the present danger shall be but a distant memory (18, 19). The description includes: the vision of the "King in his beauty," and a far-stretching peaceful land (17); the perfect security of Jerusalem, protected by Jehovah (20, 21); freedom from disease and forgiveness of sins, as privileges of the redeemed people (24).

If the chapter be Isaiah's, there can hardly be two opinions as to the circumstances in which it was composed. The unnamed enemy would necessarily be the Assyrian, and the scene pictured in v. 7 (the ambassadors of peace weeping bitterly) would seem to refer to some unrecorded embassy of Hezekiah, which must have returned from Lachish with the alarming intelligence that Sennacherib, violating every consideration of honour, insisted on the surrender of the capital (see Gen. Introd., p. xx). The prophecy would thus follow closely on ch. xxii. 1—14; and the striking contrast between the two passages might throw light on the prophet's change of attitude at this time. To this theory, which is in

And when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

O LORD, be gracious unto us ; we have waited for thee :
Be thou their arm every morning,
Our salvation also in the time of trouble.
At the noise of the tumult the people fled ;
At the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.
And your spoil shall be gathered *like* the gathering of
the caterpillar :

many ways attractive, there are certain objections arising from the character of the passage. The style and imagery are both unlike Isaiah's, and the pathetic and plaintive tone of vv. 2, 8 f. is hardly in keeping with the decisiveness which marks all his utterances. Such a prayer as that in v. 2, where the author identifies himself with his people, is without parallel in the acknowledged writings of Isaiah. Some scholars have tried to explain these characteristics by the hypothesis that the chapter is the composition of a contemporary and disciple of the prophet, or a working up of Isaianic material by a later writer. Critics of a less conservative type pronounce the passage to be post-Exilic and refer it to some episode of the Jewish struggle for independence against the Persian or Syrian kings. //

1. The enemy is described by epithets which recur in ch. xxi. 2, xxiv. 16. The obscurity of the reference is somewhat unlike Isaiah, who is usually perfectly explicit in his references to the Assyrian.

when thou shalt make an end] The Heb. verb used is supposed to mean "attain"; but it occurs nowhere else, and the reading is probably at fault. The substitution of a *Kaph* for the *Nun* gives the common verb *killāh*, "finish," which is the exact sense given by the E.V.

2. The nation's prayer to Jehovah. The writer seems to make himself the spokesman of the community, a thing which Isaiah rarely does (see xxxii. 15); nowhere, as here, in a prayer. Cheyne, however, suggests that he speaks in the name of his own disciples, for whose sake he prays that the whole nation may be spared.

be thou their arm] i.e. their strength and defence (Jer. xvii. 5). The force of the pronoun "their" is uncertain; some change it (needlessly perhaps) to "our." On the phrase "every morning," cf. ch. xxviii. 19.

3, 4. Assurance of Jehovah's victory, founded on the great deliverances of the past. The perfects in v. 3 may be either those of experience, expressing a general truth often verified in history, or of prophetic assurance. v. 4 seems to apply this truth to the present crisis.

3. *At the noise of the tumult*] the convulsions which attend the manifestation of Jehovah. The phrase is found in 1 Ki. xviii. 41 of a rain storm, and in Is. xiii. 4 of a multitudinous host.

4. *like the gathering of the caterpillar*] i.e. "as the caterpillar gathers." The last word (meaning "devourer") is one of many names for the locust. It is sometimes taken as gen. of obj. ("as men gather

As the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

- 5 The LORD *is* exalted; for he dwelleth on high:
He hath filled Zion *with* judgment and righteousness.
6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be
The stability of thy times, *and* strength of salvation:
The fear of the LORD *is* his treasure.
7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without:

locusts"), the creature being an article of diet among the poorer classes in the East; but this is opposed to the next clause. On the "running" of the locust, see Joel ii. 9, where the same verb is employed. The locusts in the figure represent the Israelites (*v.* 23).

5, 6. The writer draws encouragement from two thoughts: (1) from the nature of Israel's God; He is a spiritual Being, dwelling on high, beyond the reach of His enemies: (2) from the spiritual blessings He has conferred on His people. The connexion of these two may be gathered from ch. xxxii. 15; it is the outpouring of "spirit from on high" that has produced the fruit of righteousness in the state. That Israel possesses a religion which is essentially spiritual appears to be the ultimate ground on which the expectation of deliverance is based.

5. *judgment and righteousness* can mean nothing else than personal and civic virtues in the inhabitants of the city. Isaiah could not have written thus of the Jerusalem he knew (*cf.* i. 21); if he is the author the words must express a vivid anticipation of the great change in the national character which is now on the eve of accomplishment.

6. The verse is difficult and may be construed in several ways. We might either render "and the stability of thy times shall be a store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge" (virtually as R.V. marg.); or take the words "stability of thy times" as a complete sentence (see Davidson's *Synt.* § 3, Rem. 2), and translate as follows: **And there shall be stability in thy times; wisdom and knowledge are a store of salvation; the fear of Jehovah is his** (Israel's) **treasure.** The general idea is that a right religious attitude is the true strength of the nation and the pledge of its deliverance from all dangers. That the words "store" and "treasure" were suggested by the depleted treasury of Hezekiah is not a natural supposition.

The word *times* is used, as in Ps. xxxi. 15, in the sense of "predetermined lot."

7—9. For a moment the prophet's faith seems to relax its hold on the great principles he has enunciated, as he turns to contemplate the misery and desolation of the present. But in reality this is an additional plea for the Divine intervention, to be followed by the exultant outburst of *vv.* 10—13.

7. *their valiant ones*] This word is hopelessly obscure. It is usually translated "God's lions," i.e. 'picked warriors, each as fierce as a lion and as invincible as his God' (Cheyne: see on xxix. 1, and *cf.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 20; 1 Chr. xi. 22); and this is probably the sense intended by

The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.
 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth : 8
 He hath broken the covenant,
 He hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.
 The earth mourneth *and* languisheth : 9
 Lebanon is ashamed *and* hewn down :
 Sharon is like a wilderness ;
 And Bashan and Carmel shake off *their* fruits.

Now will I rise, saith the LORD ; 10
 Now will I be exalted ;
 Now will I lift up myself.
 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble : 11

E.V. Another suggestion is that it is a gentile name, meaning "inhabitants of Ariel." It is impossible to get beyond conjecture. The reading of the text ('*er'ellām*) appears to rest on a false etymology. It should probably be pointed as a simple plural, '*ar'ēlīm* or (if necessary) '*ār'ēlīm*. The verbs *shall cry* and *shall weep* should both be translated as presents (R.V.).

the ambassadors of peace (omit *shall*) *weep bitterly*] Cf. ch. xxii. 4. Taken in connexion with the last half of v. 8, these words seem to point to the conclusion of a treaty of peace, which had been shamelessly violated by the enemy. Those immediately responsible for the arrangement are naturally loudest in their expression of dismay. We have no certain knowledge of such negotiations between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, although such an incident might very well have happened then.

8. *The highways lie waste...ceaseth*] cf. Jud. v. 6.

he hath broken the covenant] See on v. 7.

he hath despised the cities] For '*ārīm* (cities) Duhm proposes to read '*ēdīm* (witnesses), i.e. the witnesses to the broken treaty. There might no doubt be an allusion to the capture of the fenced cities of Judah, 2 Ki. xviii. 13.

9. *The earth mourneth and languisheth*] (cf. ch. xxiv. 4, 7) in sympathy with the distress of God's people. It is the language of poetry. The "earth" is neither the whole world, nor merely the land of Palestine; its equivalent in modern parlance might be "Nature." The spots mentioned are those famous for their luxuriant vegetation, and the standing types of natural beauty and perennial verdure (cf. ch. xxxv. 2; Zech. xi. 2; Cant. vii. 4 f.). Instead of *hewn down* render with R.V. **withereth away**. The verb "shake off" requires an object to be supplied, but "their leaves" (as in R.V.) is decidedly better than "their fruits."

10—13. Jehovah's answer to the complaint and prayer of His people.

11. Still the words of Jehovah, addressed to the enemy. The present tense would be better than the future. For the first figure see ch. lix. 4; Job xv. 35; Ps. vii. 14.

Your breath, *as* fire, shall devour you.

12 And the people shall be *as* the burnings of lime :

As thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire.

13 Hear, ye *that are* far off, what I have done ;

And ye *that are* near, acknowledge my might.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid ;

Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites.

Who among us shall dwell *with* the devouring fire ?

Who amongst us shall dwell *with* everlasting burnings ?

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly ;

He that despiseth the gain of oppressions,

That shaketh his hands from holding of bribes,

your breath...] Better as R.V. **your breath** (i.e. "anger") is a **fire that devours you**.

12. *as the burnings of lime*] i.e. "as if burned to lime." An image probably suggested by Am. ii. 1. The word rendered *cut up* (R.V. **cut down**) only occurs again in Ps. lxxx. 16.

13. The signal deliverance of Jerusalem will be a great demonstration to all the world of the omnipotence of Israel's God. The verse is usually taken, and perhaps rightly, as an introduction to the second half of the poem, which deals mainly with the *consequences* of the great act of judgment.

14—16. Being thus assured of a speedy answer to his prayers, the writer proceeds, in language of great force and beauty, to describe the moral effect on the Jewish people.

14. *The sinners...hypocrites*] Rather: **The sinners are afraid in Zion, trembling hath seized the impious** (see on ch. ix. 17). An ungodly party still exists, in spite of the fact that Zion is filled with judgment and righteousness (*v.* 5). The reason of their terror is expressed in what immediately follows.

Who among us shall dwell...] The questions are not merely rhetorical, introducing the description of the righteous man, as in Ps. xv. 1, xxiv. 3; but an exclamation put into the mouths of the sinners. They realise at last what Jehovah is, and begin to wonder how they can live with Him who is a consuming fire. The word "dwell" means strictly "sojourn as a protected guest," and is the same as that used in Ps. xv. 1.

everlasting burnings] There is of course no allusion here to eternal punishment. The "fire" is Jehovah's holiness, manifested in the destruction of His enemies; and this is called eternal because the Divine wrath against sin is inexhaustible.

15, 16. A triumphant answer to the fearful self-questionings of the ungodly. The passage closely resembles Ps. xv. 2 ff., xxiv. 4 f. First the character of the true citizen of God's Kingdom is expressed in general terms, and then the details are given in which the character is revealed.

That stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood,
And shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;
He shall dwell on high:

16

His place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks:
Bread *shall be* given him; his waters *shall be* sure.

Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty:

17

They shall behold the land that is very far off.

Thine heart shall meditate terror.

18

Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the receiver?

Where *is* he that counted the towers?

that shaketh his hands] The metaphor is a very suggestive one, the verb being the same as that used in v. 9 of the trees shaking off their leaves. All these phrases, indeed, denote the keenest abhorrence of evil.

16. *he shall dwell on high*] (lit. "inhabit heights"), i.e. in absolute security, as is said of Jehovah Himself in v. 5. *the munitions of rocks*] inexpugnable rock-fortresses.

bread shall be given...] The image of a siege is still kept up: the righteous inhabits a fortress that shall never be starved into surrender.

17—24. The idea of the perfect security of the righteous man leads by an easy transition to more positive features of the golden age.

17. *the (or a) king in his beauty*] The reluctance of many expositors to interpret this phrase of the Messiah is incomprehensible. Delitzsch says that "the king of v. 17 is no more the Messiah than the Messiah in Mic. v. 1 [E.V. v. 2] is the same person as the king who is smitten on the cheek in iv. 14 [E.V. v. 1]." But in Micah the humiliated king is *replaced* by the Messiah, and surely the same conception would be in place here. That the king is Jehovah (Vitringa) is no doubt a possible alternative in view of v. 22, but since whatever be the date of the passage the Messianic hope must have been a living idea of Jewish religion, there seems no reason for trying to evade what seems the most natural explanation. On the "beauty" of the king see Ps. xlv. 2.

the land that is very far off] Rather as R.V., *a far stretching land* (lit. "a land of distances"), the spacious and ever-extending dominions of the Messiah. Few verses of the O.T. have been more misapplied than this.

18, 19. In those days it will require an effort of imagination to recall the dangers of the present, from which the nation shall have been so suddenly and so marvellously saved.

18. *shall meditate terror*] Or, better, *shall muse on the terror* (R.V.),—strive to realise its various circumstances which have so completely disappeared.

Where is the scribe?...receiver] Render with R.V. *where is he that counted, where is he that weighed*; the officers who exacted the tribute.

that counted the towers] calculating the strength of the city with a view to attack it.

- 19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people,
A people of a deeper speech than *thou* canst perceive;
Of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst* not under-
stand.
- 20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities:
Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation,
A tabernacle *that* shall not be taken down;
Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed,
Neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.
- 21 But there the glorious LORD *will be* unto us
A place of broad rivers *and* streams;
Wherein shall go no galley with oars,
Neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.
- 22 For the LORD *is* our judge, the LORD *is* our lawgiver,
The LORD *is* our king; he will save us.
- 23 Thy tacklings are loosed;

19. *Thou shalt not see the fierce people*] Some render "people of barbarous speech"; cf. ch. xxviii. 11. *of a deeper speech, &c.*] (Ez. iii. 5), of too deep speech to be understood.

that thou canst not understand] Or, without sense.

20, 21. The permanent peace and inviolability of Jerusalem, the centre of the true religion: see ch. xxxii. 18.

20. For *solemnities*, render **festal assembly**.

a tabernacle that shall not be taken down] Better (as R.V.), **a tent that shall not be removed**. For the figure, cf. Jer. x. 20.

21. Here Jerusalem is represented like the great cities of the Nile and Euphrates (cf. Nah. iii. 8), as surrounded by an expanse of waters, protecting it from the approach of an enemy. The idea of course is purely poetical.

the glorious LORD] Strictly, **a glorious One, Jehovah**. For *a place of* read **instead of**, as Hos. i. 10 (where see R.V.).

galley with oars] probably should be **flotilla of boats**. The meaning appears to be that the city shall not be approached by any description of vessels of war. "Pass thereby" may be rendered "pass over it."

22. In the New Jerusalem Jehovah is Judge, Lawgiver and King, and therefore also its Deliverer from every danger.

23. The abrupt transition from the glorious future to the present or the past, in the first part of the verse, is somewhat surprising at this point. It is not Assyria but Zion which is compared to an unseaworthy ship, a comparison natural enough in itself, as when we speak of the "ship of state."

Thy tacklings are loosed] Or, **thy ropes hung slack**.

They could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail:

Then is the prey of a great spoil divided;

The lame take the prey.

And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick:

The people that dwell therein *shall be* forgiven their iniquity.

24

they could not well strengthen, &c.] they could not hold fast the foot of their mast, they did not spread out the sail (or, "the ensign").

The subject here is the ropes; they could not serve the two purposes for which they were intended, supporting the mast and extending the sail. The word rendered *well* must from its position be a substantive; it denotes the *μεσόδμη*, the cross-beam into which the mast was let, or else the hole in the keel which received its foot (*ιστοπέδη*). The rendering "sail" is doubtful. The word means elsewhere "ensign," and one is tempted to translate it "flag." But it is said that ships had no flags in ancient times (Cornill on Ez. xxvii. 7).

the prey of a great spoil] Rather, "prey of spoil in abundance." The expression "prey of spoil" is perhaps to be explained like the Latin *praeda exuviarum*. The figure of the ship is entirely dropped. On the word for "prey" see on ch. ix. 6.

24. The healing of disease and the forgiveness of sin are combined as in Ps. ciii. 3; Matt. ix. 2 ff., &c. To the Old Testament saints sickness was the proof of God's displeasure and of sin unforgiven. Hence in the conception of the Messianic community, the abolition of sickness, the chief evil of life, is the indispensable pledge that guilt is taken away. Cf. Ex. xxiii. 25.

CH. XXXIV., XXXV. A PROPHECY OF VENGEANCE ON EDMO, AND THE FUTURE BLESSEDNESS OF ISRAEL.

The oracle consists of two sharply contrasted eschatological pictures, one of judgment, the other of redemption.

i. The first (ch. xxxiv.) commences with a lurid description of the terrors of the last judgment, which is a universal judgment on the nations of the world (*vv.* 1—4). But this passes abruptly (*vv.* 5—17) into a threat of special and fearful vengeance on Edom for its implacable hostility to the people of God (*v.* 8). An indiscriminate slaughter of its population is decreed (5—8); and the land shall be turned into a perpetual desolation, haunted by desert beasts and creatures of demon kind (9—17).

ii. Ch. xxxv. is a beautiful prophecy of Israel's restoration, in imagery borrowed chiefly from the second part of the book of Isaiah. The marvellous transformation of nature, the appearing of Jehovah to deliver His people, the cessation of human infirmities, and the raising of a highway for the redeemed of the Lord to return, lead up to the final promise of everlasting joy and gladness to the ransomed nation, and the banishment of sorrow and sighing from their midst.

- 34 Come near, ye nations, to hear ;
 And hearken, ye people :
 Let the earth hear, and all that is therein ;
 The world, and all things that come forth of it.
 2 For the indignation of the LORD *is* upon all nations,
 And *his* fury upon all their armies :
 He hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them
 to the slaughter.
 3 Their slain also shall be cast out,
 And their stink shall come up *out of* their carcasses,
 And the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

The passage is post-Exilic. Although the "perpetual hatred" (Ez. xxxv. 5) of Edom to Judah no doubt dated from the subjugation of the former country by David (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14), so passionate a longing for vengeance as we find here is only intelligible after the crowning exhibition of Edomitish hostility in the day of Jerusalem's calamity (cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 7; Ezek. xxv. 12, xxxv. 5, 10 ff.; Obad. 10—16). This conclusion is confirmed by obvious traces of familiarity with writings belonging to the end of the Exile if not later (chs. xiii., xiv., xl. ff., esp. lxiii. 1—6), and by the fact that the dispersion of the Jews is presupposed by ch. xxxv. A more exact determination of its date is impossible. The mutual antipathy of Judah and Edom continued unabated for centuries after the Exile, and was constantly inflamed by fresh encroachments on Judean territory on the part of the Edomites, who in this period were being dispossessed of their ancestral possessions by the growing power of the Nabatæans. Some such incident may have been the occasion of the threat in Mal. i. 2—5 (c. 450 B.C.), and a succession of them would keep alive the embittered feeling which is unmistakably present in this prophecy. !

1—4. The announcement of the world-judgment, introduced by a proclamation addressed to all nations. The peoples are invited to *come near*, as if for debate (ch. xli. 1, xlviii. 16, lvii. 3), but really to hear their doom. Cf. ch. i. 2; Deut. xxxii. 1; Mic. i. 2.

all that is therein] Better, **the fulness thereof** (R.V.);—the same word as in ch. vi. 3.

all things that come forth of it] The word is used (1) of vegetation, the produce of the earth, (2) of a man's issue: here, apparently, by a mixture of metaphors, of mankind as springing from the earth.

2. *For the indignation of the LORD...*] Rather, **For Jehovah hath indignation...and fury**. It is remarkable that no reason is assigned for Jehovah's anger.

their armies] **their host** (R.V.). *he hath utterly destroyed them*] Lit. **he hath made them a devoted thing**,—*ḥērem*, a technical word for that which is irrevocably devoted to the deity, usually implying utter destruction. Cf. ch. xi. 15.

3. Cf. Joel ii. 20; Am. iv. 10.

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, 4
 And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scrole :
 And all their host shall fall down,
 As the leaf falleth off from the vine,
 And as a fallen *fig* from the fig tree.
 For my sword shall be bathed in heaven : 5
 Behold, it shall come down upon Idumea,
 And upon the people of my curse, to judgment.
 The sword of the LORD is filled *with* blood, 6
 It is made fat with fatness,
 And with the blood of lambs and goats,
 With the fat of the kidneys of rams :
 For the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah,
 And a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.
 And the unicorns shall come down with them, 7

4. The representation seems somewhat confused. Bickell acutely observes that "the host of heaven" is probably a marginal gloss to "their host" later in the verse, and that the original subject of the first clause ("the hills") has been displaced by it. The first line then supplies the parallel to the last line of v. 3:—

"And the mountains shall melt with their blood

(4.) And all [the hills] shall be dissolved."

and the heavens...as a scrole] Cf. ch. li. 6; Ps. cii. 26; Matt. xxiv. 29; Rev. vi. 13, 14.

fall down...falleth off from...fallen fig] R.V. **fade away...fadeth from off...fading leaf.**

5—8. The slaughter of the inhabitants of Edom.

5. *my sword* (see on ch. xxvii. 1) *shall be bathed*] Better: **is drunk**; i.e. not "with blood" (which suggests an idea foreign to this passage) but "with fury," in preparation for its work, which is on earth.

Idumea] Read **Edom** with R.V. The A.V. uses this Greek form here and in v. 6, and in Ezek. xxxv. 15, xxxvi. 5, without any justification.

the people of my curse] The last word is strictly **ban** (*hērem*, cf. v. 2): "the people on whom I have laid the ban."

6. *The sword of the LORD is filled*] Render: **A sword hath Jehovah which is filled, &c.**

made fat with fatness] Or, "greased with fat" (different words in the original). The Edomites are compared to sacrificial animals; cf. Zeph. i. 7; Jer. xvi. 10, li. 40; Ezek. xxxix. 17 ff. (See also 2 Sam. i. 22.)

Bozrah (ch. lxiii. 1; Gen. xxxvi. 33; Am. i. 12; Jer. xlix. 13, 22) was a chief city of Edom, certainly not a place of that name in the Hauran; more probably *El-Buseira*, south of the Dead Sea; but Wetzstein identifies it with Petra.

7. For *unicorns* render with R.V. **wild oxen.**

- And the bullocks with the bulls ;
 And their land shall be soaked with blood,
 And their dust made fat with fatness.
 8 For *it is* the day of the LORD's vengeance,
 And the year of recompences for the controversy of
 Zion.
 9 And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch,
 And the dust thereof into brimstone,
 And the land thereof shall become burning pitch.
 10 It shall not be quenched night nor day ;
 The smoke thereof shall go up for ever :
 From generation to generation it shall lie waste ;
 None shall pass through it for ever and ever.
 11 But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it ;
 The owl also and the raven shall dwell in it :
 And he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion,
 and the stones of emptiness.

come down] sc. to the place of slaughter, Jer. xlviii. 15, &c.

8. Comp. ch. lxi. 2, lxiii. 4; Jer. l. 28, li. 6, 11.

the controversy of Zion] with Edom.

9—17. The fate of the land of Edom is next represented under two incompatible images,—first that of a perpetual conflagration (*vv.* 9, 10), and second that of a dreary solitude, peopled only by “doleful creatures” (*vv.* 11 ff.).

9, 10. The description is no doubt suggested by the volcanic phenomena which accompanied the destruction of the neighbouring cities of the Plain (Gen. xix.; Jer. xlix. 18). The division of clauses in the LXX. is much preferable to that in the Hebrew Text. Render accordingly: **...and its land shall become pitch, burning night and day; it shall not be quenched for ever; its smoke shall go up from generation to generation; it shall lie waste to all eternity, none passing through it** (so Cheyne). The last two clauses prepare for the transition to the other picture of ruin, which is elaborated in the verses that follow.

11. *the cormorant and the bittern*] Zeph. ii. 14. R.V. has “the pelican (Lev. xi. 18; Ps. cii. 6) and the porcupine”; for the latter see on ch. xiv. 23.

the line of confusion, and the stones (R.V. **plummet**) *of emptiness*] See on ch. xxviii. 17. These implements of the builder were naturally employed where a partial destruction (of houses, &c.) was contemplated; but the image is also extended to the case of complete demolition; 2 Ki. xxi. 13; Lam. ii. 8. “Confusion” and “emptiness” stand for the words *tôhû* and *bôhû*, used of the primeval chaos in Gen. i. 2 (cf. Jer. iv. 23).

They shall call the nobles thereof *to* the kingdom, but ¹²
none *shall be* there,

And all her princes shall be nothing.

And thorns shall come up *in* her palaces,

Nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: ¹³

And it shall be a habitation of dragons,

And a court for owls.

The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the ¹⁴
wild beasts of the island,

And the satyr shall cry to his fellow;

The shrich owl also shall rest there,

And find for herself a place of rest.

There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, ¹⁵

And hatch, and gather under her shadow:

There shall the vultures also be gathered,

Every one *with* her mate.

12. *They shall call the nobles...there*] A very obscure sentence, probably through a defect in the text. The rendering of E.V. might be maintained if with Prof. Weir we suppose a transposition of words in the original; the inference being that the monarchy in Edom was elective (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 31 ff.). More likely, however, "her nobles" is the subject of a sentence the rest of which is now lost; and the following words are to be translated "and there is no kingdom there which they may proclaim."

13. The mention of nobles and princes naturally leads to the palaces and castles.

dragons...owls] **jackals...ostriches** (R.V.). See on ch. xiii. 21 f.

14. *wild beasts of the desert...wild beasts of the island...satyr*] See on ch. xiii. 21 f.

the shrich owl] The Hebr. is *Lîlîth*, a fem. formation from *lîl* "night." Render with Cheyne: **the night-hag**. Lilith appears to be a creation of the Babylonian demonology. "This Lilith plays a great part in the Talmudic demonology; the cabalistic Rabbis forged a whole legend in which this spirit is said to have taken a feminine form to deceive Adam, and to have united herself to him." (Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic*, Engl. Tr. p. 38.) She is mentioned in the Bible only here.

find for herself a place of rest] On the restlessness of evil spirits, cf. Matt. xii. 43, "walketh through dry places, seeking rest."

15. *the great owl*] **the arrowsnake** as in R.V.

gather under her shadow] The expression is almost meaningless, when applied to a very small snake. Duhm, by a clever emendation, reads "shall lay and hatch and heap up her eggs" (*bēḡehā* for *bēḡillāh*).

16. The verse is remarkable in several respects. It seems to be a solemn assurance that the foregoing prediction shall be fulfilled

- 16 Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read :
 No one of these shall fail,
 None shall want her mate :
 For my mouth it hath commanded,
 And his spirit it hath gathered them.
- 17 And he hath cast the lot for them,
 And his hand hath divided it unto them by line :
 They shall possess it for ever,
 From generation to generation shall they dwell therein.
- 35 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad *for*
 them ;
 And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

literally and down to the smallest details; and must therefore be addressed to a future generation of readers. This implies a view of the scope and functions of prophecy, which is not that of the older prophets. Further, the expression "book of Jehovah" appears to point to the existence of a prophetic canon; and the opening exhortation presupposes a habit of searching for evidences of the fulfilment of prophecy. All these circumstances would indicate a late date for the composition of this oracle. Some commentators, however, have sought to evade this interpretation by amending the text with the help of the LXX.; reading: "According to their number Jehovah calls them, &c." But the received text excites no suspicion.

the book of the LORD] The immediate reference must be to the present prophecy, since there is no other which speaks of the desert creatures that are to possess the land of Edom. But the phrase is too pregnant to be used of a detached oracle; we must therefore conclude that it was destined to be incorporated in a collection of sacred writings.

my mouth...his spirit] The change of person is harsh. Read either "his mouth" or (better) "the mouth of Jehovah" (LXX. has "Jehovah" alone).

17. The eternity of the judgment is again emphasised (*v.* 10).

Ch. xxxv. is full of reminiscences of earlier prophecies, chiefly from ch. xl. ff. Although there is no external mark of transition, there is no reason to doubt that it is the continuation of ch. xxxiv., and that the brilliant contrast is designed.

1, 2. Joy in the desert, now transformed into a fertile and luxuriant plain. Cf. ch. xli. 18 f.

1. *solitary place*] **parched land** (R.V. marg.).

The words *for them* should be omitted; what looks like a pronominal suffix in the Hebr. being produced by an assimilation of the verbal ending to the following consonant (so already Aben Ezra).

the rose is probably the **autumn crocus** (R.V. marg.). Cant. ii. 1 shews that a meadow-flower of striking beauty is meant. Many commentators

It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice
Even *with* joy and singing:
The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it,
The excellency of Carmel and Sharon,
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
And the excellency of our God.

Strengthen ye the weak hands,
And confirm the feeble knees.
Say to them that are of a fearful heart,
Be strong, fear not:
Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance,
Even God *with* a recompence;
He will come and save you.
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then shall the lame *man* leap as a hart,
And the tongue of the dumb sing:
For in the wilderness shall waters break out,
And streams in the desert.
And the parched ground shall become a pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water:

prefer the narcissus, a spring flower exceptionally plentiful in the plain of Sharon. (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, pp. 476 f.)

2. *the glory of Lebanon...Carmel and Sharon*] Cf. ch. xxxiii. 9, xxix. 17 (xxxii. 15).

they (lit. **these**) *shall see the glory of the LORD*] ch. xl. 5.

3, 4. An exhortation to the despondent. For the figures of v. 3 see Job iv. 3, 4.

4. Cf. xl. 9, 10. *them that are of a fearful heart*] Lit. "the hasty of heart." The phrase occurs with a different sense in ch. xxxii. 4. *behold, your God...recompence*] Better (as R.V. marg.): **behold your God! vengeance cometh, the recompence of God; He Himself, &c.**

5, 6 a. The removal of bodily infirmities. How far the language is to be taken figuratively it may be difficult to say. Comp. ch. xxix. 18, xxxii. 3, 4.

6 b, 7. The transformation of the desert. Cf. ch. xliii. 19, 20, xlviii. 21, xlix. 10.

7. *the parched ground*] The Hebr. word (*shārāb*, only again in xlix. 10) is generally thought to be identical with *Serāb*, the Arabic name for the **mirage** (so R.V. marg.). Allusions to this remarkable optical phenomenon, by which even experienced travellers are often

In the habitation of dragons, where each lay,
Shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

- 8 And a highway shall be there, and a way,
 And it shall be called The way of holiness;
 The unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for
 those:

The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.

- 9 No lion shall be there,
 Nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon,
 It shall not be found there;
 But the redeemed shall walk *there*:

deceived, are, as might be expected, common in Arabic literature.
 Cf. *Koran* (Sura xxiv. 39):—

“The works of the unbelievers are like the mirage in the
 desert;

The thirsty takes it for water, till he comes up to it and finds
 that it is nothing.”

(Quoted by Gesenius.) The idea in the text, therefore, would be that
 the illusion which mocks the thirsty caravan shall become a reality;
 water shall be as common in the desert as the mirage now is. The
 rendering “parched ground,” however, corresponds with Jewish usage
 and the ancient versions; and the sense “mirage” is unsuitable in
 ch. xlix. 10.

in the habitation...ruses] A literal rendering of the Hebr. would
 be: “in the habitation of jackals, its lair, a court (the word rendered
 ‘habitation’ in E.V. of ch. xxxiv. 13) for reeds and rushes.” This yields
 no sense. The text appears to have suffered extensive mutilation.

8—10. The highway in the desert. The image is founded on ch. xl. 3,
 xliii. 19, xlix. 11 (xi. 16).

8. The words *and a way* are superfluous, and may have originated
 through dittography.

but it shall be for those] Better (with an emendation of the text):
but it shall be for his people. It is probable also that the next words
 should be joined to this clause,—“it shall be for His people when it
 walks in the way,” i.e. goes on pilgrimage. The verse as a whole
 suggests that the way is for the permanent use of pilgrims (cf. ch. xix.
 23), not for the temporary purpose of the Return from Babylon (as in
 ch. xliii. 19, &c.). Another proposed rendering is “and He Himself
 (Jehovah) walks in the way for them” (cf. ch. lii. 12). But this is less
 natural.

fools shall not err therein] If this clause be (as suggested) independent
 of the preceding, the meaning possibly is that fools shall not be there at
 all. The Hebr. word for “fool” (*‘ēvil*) connotes moral perversity, not
 merely the simplicity of inexperience (Job v. 3; Prov. i. 7).

9. *the redeemed]* cf. ch. li. 10, lxii. 12, lxiii. 4.

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
 And come to Zion with songs
 And everlasting joy upon their heads:
 They shall obtain joy and gladness,
 And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

10. The verse is found verbatim in ch. li. 11. Cf. also li. 3, lxi. 7.

everlasting joy shall be upon their heads] See ch. lxi. 3—"a garland for ashes" (R.V.).

CHAPTERS XXXVI.—XXXIX.

These chapters form the conclusion of the first part of the book of Isaiah. They contain narratives of three important historical events, each of which illustrates the commanding influence exercised by the prophet in the reign of Hezekiah. These are:—(1) the unsuccessful efforts of Sennacherib to obtain possession of Jerusalem by threats and blandishments (ch. xxxvi., xxxvii.); (2) Hezekiah's sickness and recovery (ch. xxxviii.); and (3) the embassy of Merodach-Baladan to Hezekiah (ch. xxxix.). At a time when the books of Scripture circulated separately it was important that readers of the book of Isaiah should have before them all the information about the career of the great prophet that could be collected from authentic sources; and there is no reasonable doubt that these chapters are an excerpt from the canonical books of Kings (2 Kings xviii. 13—xx. 19). The view of Vitrina and others that Isaiah himself is the author, and that the passage was transferred from his pages to those of the historian, is not borne out by a comparison of the two texts. Not only is the text in Kings on the whole superior to that in Isaiah, but the narrative before us reveals its secondary character by a tendency towards abridgement and simplification; and in other respects shews "manifest traces of having passed through the hands of the compiler of Kings" (Driver, *Introd.*, p. 215). Moreover, it is extremely unlikely that the death of Sennacherib (B.C. 681) recorded in xxxvii. 38 happened within the lifetime of Isaiah. That the editor of the books of Kings drew in his turn upon an older document is probable; but there is no reason to suppose that the Isaianic editor used this work as an independent authority.

The only important differences between the two narratives are: (a) the omission in Isaiah of the account of Hezekiah's submission (2 Ki. xviii. 14—16); and (b) the addition of Hezekiah's Psalm of Thanksgiving on his recovery (ch. xxxviii. 9—20). The omission (a) can be explained by the author's desire to pass over an incident which was not of immediate interest for the biography of Isaiah. (Other critical and historical questions raised by these verses do not concern us here; but see General Introduction, pp. xix ff.) The Song of Hezekiah must have been added from a separate source.

36 Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, *that* Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against

CH. XXXVI., XXXVII. HEZEKIAH, ENCOURAGED BY ISAIAH, RESISTS SENNACHERIB'S SUMMONS TO SURRENDER.

[[We have here to all appearance the record of two successive attempts of the Assyrian king to extort the surrender of Jerusalem; in the first instance by a display of armed force (xxxvi. 1—xxxvii. 8), and then by a threatening letter to Hezekiah (xxxvii. 9—38). There is certainly some improbability in the view thus presented of Sennacherib's conduct. The advance of Tirhakah no doubt rendered the possession of Jerusalem more than ever indispensable to his safety, and a second summons to Hezekiah after the first had failed is in these circumstances perfectly intelligible. But it is less easy to suppose that he could have expected Hezekiah, with Ethiopian succour at hand, and after having defied a detachment of the Assyrian army, to yield to a mere letter, and one that simply repeats the former arguments with no additional inducement to surrender. There is besides a close parallelism between the two incidents which suggests the possibility that the chapters may contain two versions of the same occurrence instead of a single narrative of two successive events. If this view be correct the first narrative breaks off in the middle of xxxvii. 9 with the words "and when he heard it," and is resumed and concluded in *vv.* 37, 38. The duplicate version is given in the intermediate section (*vv.* 9 b—36). The assumption may not be quite necessary, but it has commended itself even to cautious critics like Dillmann and Kittel, and deserves consideration. Nor does it seriously affect the historic credibility of the record. The discrepancies are perhaps not greater than between parallel accounts in the four Gospels. //

1. (Cf. 2 Ki. xviii. 13.) *in the fourteenth year*] The year of Sennacherib's expedition was beyond question 701 B.C. If this was really the fourteenth year of Hezekiah his accession must have taken place in 715. On the objections to this date, see Chronological Note, pp. lxxvi f. Assuming that the arguments there given are valid, the error in this verse might be accounted for in either of two ways. (1) It has been suggested that ch. xxxviii. f. stood originally before ch. xxxvi. f., and that in the process of transposition the precise specification of time, which really belonged to ch. xxxviii., was retained as the introduction to the whole group of narratives. The 14th year of Hezekiah would thus be the true date, not necessarily of Sennacherib's invasion, but of Hezekiah's sickness and the embassy of Merodach-Baladan. (2) A second supposition is that the date was inserted here by an editor, who arrived at it by a calculation based on ch. xxxviii. 5. Deducting the 15 years' lease of life assured to Hezekiah by the prophet from the 29 years of his reign, he rightly concluded that his sickness must have occurred in the 14th year of his reign, and supposing further that all these events were nearly contemporaneous, he substituted this exact date for some vaguer statement which he may have found in his original. A third hypothesis,—that the date is correct, but that the

all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiab's son, which *was* over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence *is* this wherein thou trustest? I say, *sayest thou*, (but *they are but* vain words) *I have* counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Lo, thou trustest in 6

name Sennacherib has been wrongly written for Sargon,—falls to the ground with the whole theory of an invasion of Judah by the latter monarch.)

all the defenced cities of Judah] Sennacherib himself boasts that he captured forty-six of them in this campaign.

2. *Rabshakeh* is not a proper name, but an official designation, like the Tartan (see ch. xx. 1) and the Rab-saris (chief eunuch) who are mentioned along with him in 2 Ki. xviii. 17. The Assyrian word is *Rab-saq*, said to mean "chief of the officers."

from Lachish] The most important Judæan fortress in the Shephelah, commanding the road from Egypt. Recent excavations by Mr Flinders Petrie have identified its site with Tell-el-Hesi, a few miles distant from the modern Umm Lakis.

the conduit of the upper pool...] See on ch. vii. 3.

3. The words "and they called the king" in 2 Ki. xviii. 18 are omitted. *which was over the house*] See ch. xxii. 15. It will be seen that in accordance with ch. xxii. 20, Eliakim here occupies the office formerly held by Shebna, although the latter still appears in a subordinate capacity as *scribe* or rather *secretary* (R.V. marg.).

the recorder] Lit. **the remembrancer**.

4—10. The speech of the Rabshakeh, dealing with the two motives which might be supposed to have induced Hezekiah to rebel: (1) his reliance on the help of Egypt (v. 6), and (2) his religious confidence in Jehovah (v. 7); and urging him to submit to the king of Assyria (vv. 8—10).

5. *I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) &c.*] Rather (as Cheyne and others) **Thinkest thou that a mere word of the lips is counsel and strength for war?** "You cannot think so," reasons the Rabshakeh, "you must have some ground of confidence; what is it?" The rendering of A.V. which takes the phrase "merely a word of the lips" as a parenthetic ejaculation is intelligible, but hardly right. In any case the text must be corrected in accordance with that of 2 Kings xviii. 20 ("thou sayest [thinkest]" for "I say [think]").

the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: *is it* not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language;

6. *the staff of this broken reed*] For the idea, cf. ch. xxx. 1—5; for the figure, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.

7. Not only is Hezekiah destitute of earthly help, but he has forfeited the protection of his own deity, by what from the heathen point of view seemed an act of sacrilege, the abolition of the local sanctuaries (see 2 Ki. xviii. 4).

8. *give pledges...to*] Better (as R.V. marg.): **make a wager with**. The taunt must have been peculiarly galling to the war-party in Judah, who were painfully conscious of their weakness in cavalry; ch. xxx. 16, xxxi. 1, 3, and v. 9 of this chapter.

9. Hezekiah's power is not equal to that of the lowest official in the Assyrian Empire; yet he dares to defy the great king! The word rendered *captain* means the governor of a province. —

10. That the Assyrian should represent himself as commissioned by Jehovah to avenge the desecration of his sanctuaries is not by any means incredible. A precisely similar sentiment is put into the mouth of Cyrus in his account of the conquest of Babylon. It expresses no serious religious conviction (see v. 20); and the resemblance to Isaiah's teaching (ch. x. 5 ff.) is either accidental, or is due to a Jewish colouring unconsciously imparted to the narrative by the writer.

For *this land*, in the first half of the verse, we read in 2 Ki. xviii. 25 "this place," i.e. Jerusalem.

11, 12. The Judæan ministers, fearing the effect of these threats on the people, implore the Rabshakeh to speak to them in Aramaic; but the astute diplomatist immediately perceives his advantage, and sets himself to stir up disaffection amongst the populace.

11. *the Syrian* (or **Aramean** R.V. marg.) *language*] was the medium of international communication in Western Asia, more especially of

for we understand *it*: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that *are* on the wall. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master ¹² and to thee to speak these words? *hath he not sent me* to the men that sit upon the wall, that *they* may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you? Then ¹³ Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus saith the king, Let ¹⁴ not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in ¹⁵ the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king ¹⁶ of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me *by* a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one *of* his vine, and every one *of* his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land ¹⁷ like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of

commerce. Assyrian on the other hand was a barbarous tongue to the Hebrews (ch. xxviii. 11, xxxiii. 19).

the Jews' language] Hebrew is so called only in one other (post-Exilic) passage, Neh. xiii. 24.

12. *that they may eat...*] Note the contrast in v. 16. The clause, therefore, expresses not the desire or purpose of the king of Assyria, but the effect of submitting to Hezekiah's insane policy.

13—20. The Rabshakeh's appeal to the people.

13. *the great king*] It is to be observed that the speaker consistently withholds the title of king from Hezekiah.

15. *The LORD will surely deliver us*] Cf. ch. xxxvii. 35.

16. *Make an agreement with me by a present*] R.V. **Make peace with me.** Lit. "Make to me a blessing" (see R.V. marg.). The expression does not occur elsewhere, and its exact sense is doubtful. Probably "make peaceful submission to me."

come out to me] The ordinary phrase for the surrender of a city (1 Sam. xi. 3; Jer. xxi. 9, &c.). *and eat*] **that ye may eat.** If they will but yield now, they may at once resume the cultivation of their fields and orchards.

17. But only for a time! The Rabshakeh does not conceal from them that their ultimate fate will be deportation; although he tries to present it in an attractive light. The parallel verse in 2 Kings (xviii. 32) contains these additional words "a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die; and hearken not unto Hezekiah."

- 18 bread and vineyards. *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of
 19 Assyria? Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered
 20 Samaria out of my hand? Who *are they* amongst all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of
 21 my hand? But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying,
 22 Answer him not. Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.
 37 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and
 2 went *into* the house of the LORD. And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah

18—20. The long record of Assyrian conquest shews the folly of Hezekiah's trust in Divine power. Cf. ch. x. 9—11.

persuade] Rather, **beguile**.

19. On *Hamath and Arphad*, see ch. x. 9. *Sepharvaim* has usually been identified with Sippar to the north of Babylon. Since, however, it is always mentioned along with Hamath and Arpad, it is more probable that a city in northern Syria is meant. Some consider it to be the same as Sibraim in Ezek. xlvii. 16 (between Damascus and Hamath).

2 Ki. xviii. 34 adds *Hena and Irvah* as in ch. xxxvii. 13.

and have they delivered] Others translate "how much less have they (the gods of Samaria) delivered." The Hebrew is peculiar.

21. *they held their peace*] i.e. the people on the wall, as is expressed in 2 Ki. xviii. 36.

xxxvii. 1—4. Hezekiah, thrown back at last on the policy of faith consistently advocated by Isaiah, sends an influential deputation to the prophet, entreating him to intercede for the nation in this extremity. (Cf. 2 Ki. xxii. 12—14; Jer. xxxvii. 3.) The king's message could not fail to be interpreted as a public confession of the utter failure of the policy which had landed him in such a desperate situation.

1. *went into the house of the LORD*] See vv. 14, 15. Cf. 1 Ki. viii. 33, 34.

2. The embassy consists of the two chief ministers, and the "elders of the priests." The appearance of Shebna on such an errand was a striking evidence of the completeness of Isaiah's moral victory (ch. xxii. 15 ff.).

the prophet the son of Amoz. And they said unto him, 3 Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth. It may be 4 the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left. So the servants of king Hezekiah 5 came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye 6 say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will 7 send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and

3. *a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy*] Rather, of distress and chastisement and rejection. The word for "blasphemy" (Neh. ix. 18, 26; Ezek. xxxv. 12) is differently pointed from that here used, which occurs only here and in 2 Ki. xix. 3. The sense "rejection" suits the context better; the king speaks of the "distress" as a Divine dispensation.

the children are come to the birth...] Obviously a proverbial expression for a crisis which becomes dangerous through lack of strength to meet it (cf. ch. lxvi. 9; Hos. xiii. 13).

4. *It may be*] Or "Peradventure." The one hope is that Jehovah will take notice of the dishonour done to His name by the threats and blasphemies of the Assyrian king.

the LORD thy God] See ch. vii. 13. The prophet stands nearer to God than other men. Jehovah is *the living God*, as opposed to the dead idols to whose level the boast of the Assyrian had degraded Him. (Cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 36.)

wherefore lift up] Or perhaps "and that thou wilt lift up,"—still dependent on "It may be." The efficacy of intercessory prayer is taught and assumed throughout the Old Testament: see Gen. xviii. 23 ff.; Ex. xxxii. 31 ff.; 1 Sam. xii. 19; Am. vii. 2, 5; Jer. xiv. 11, xv. 1, &c.

the remnant that is left] Cf. v. 32. The idea is Isaiah's; but the word is not that used elsewhere by the prophet himself.

5. The verse is really subordinate to v. 6,—*"And when the servants ...came...Isaiah said,"* &c.

6, 7. Isaiah's answer far exceeds the king's request. He does not need now to pray, for he is already in possession of the Divine message for this crisis.

6. *the servants*] Lit. "the youths." Cf. 1 Kings xx. 14.

7. *I will send a blast upon him*] Render as in R.V. *I will put a spirit in him*, i.e. a spirit of craven fear, depriving him of his natural courage and resourcefulness. How the spirit will work is stated in what follows: a mere rumour will drive him back to his own land, there to

return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

- 8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed
9 from Lachish. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of
11 Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt
12 thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in
13 Telassar? Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of

meet his death (cf. 2 Ki. vii. 6). There is no allusion in this oracle to the disastrous blow recorded in v. 36. The "rumour" is no doubt that of the approach of Tirhakah (v. 9).

8. *Libnah*] another of the "defenced cities" of Judah (Josh. x. 29). Its situation is not known.

9. *Tirhakah king of Ethiopia* is named only here in the O.T. See General Introduction, p. xvi.

10—13. Sennacherib's letter to Hezekiah. It is in substance a repetition of the chief argument of the Rabshakeh, with the unimportant modification that Hezekiah is here regarded as deceived by his God, while the Rabshakeh chose to represent him as a deceiver of his people.

11. *by destroying them utterly*] Lit. **putting them to the ban**, see on ch. xxxiv. 2.

12. *my fathers* here means "my predecessors"; for the dynasty to which Sennacherib belonged had been founded by his father Sargon. The place-names in this verse are all found on the Assyrian monuments. (See Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, on 2 Ki. xix. 12.) *Gozan* (Assyr. *Guzana*) is one of the places to which the Northern Israelites were exiled (2 Ki. xvii. 6, xviii. 11); it lay on the river Chaboras, a northern affluent of the Euphrates. *Haran* is the well-known commercial emporium of northern Mesopotamia, on another tributary (the Belikh) west of the Chaboras. *Rezeph* (Assyr. *Rasappa*) is about 20 miles south of the Euphrates on the route from Haran to Palmyra. *Telassar* is in Assyrian *Til-Assuri* ("Hill of Asshur"), a name likely to be of frequent occurrence. The place here can hardly be the Babylonian Til-Assuri mentioned in the monuments; it may rather have been one of the cities of *Eden*, i.e. the small kingdom called *Bit-Adini* on the Upper Euphrates.

13. *Hamath...Arphad...Sepharvaim*] See ch. xxxvi. 19. *Hena*

Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the ¹⁴ messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up *unto* the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. And ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying, O LORD of hosts, ¹⁶ God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O ¹⁷ LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of ¹⁸

and Ivah (R.V. more correctly, *Ivvah*) are not known. The latter is probably the same as *Ava* or *Avva* (2 Ki. xvii. 24).

14—20. Hezekiah's prayer in the Temple. Cheyne refers to a striking parallel in the Egyptian version of Sennacherib's overthrow. "On this the monarch (Sethos), greatly distressed, entered into the inner sanctuary, and before the image of the god (Ptah) bewailed the fate which impended over him. As he wept he fell asleep, and dreamed that the god came and stood by his side, bidding him be of good cheer, and go boldly forth to meet the Arabian (Assyrian) host, which would do him no hurt, as he himself would send those who should help him" (Herod. II. 141, Rawlinson).

14. *spread it* (the letter) *before the LORD*] that Jehovah might take notice of the arrogance displayed by it. The act is symbolic. Similarly the Jews at the beginning of the Maccabee insurrection spread out in prayer a copy of the Law, defaced with idolatrous pictures, as a witness to the outrages perpetrated against their religion (1 Macc. iii. 48).

16. The prayer opens with a solemn invocation of Jehovah, first as God of Israel, and second as the only true God and Creator of all things. *that dwellest between* (or, *art enthroned upon*) *the cherubims*] Cf. 1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2; Ps. lxxx. 1. The Cherubim may have been originally symbolic representations of the storm-cloud (see Ps. xviii. 10) and hence bearers of the Divine Presence (Ezek. i.); but the reference here is undoubtedly to the two figures over the ark in the Temple; Jehovah, therefore, is addressed as the God of the Temple.

thou art the God...alone] **Thou art (He that is) God alone.** The sole divinity of Jehovah is here presented as a theological consequence of the doctrine of creation, a fundamental idea in the teaching of ch. xl. ff. Although the doctrine of creation was held in Israel from the earliest times, it seems to have been by slow degrees that its full religious significance was apprehended.

17. *open thine eyes...and see*] The Hebr. has "thine eye," which is probably a better reading than "thine eyes" in 2 Ki. xix. 16. So "who hath sent" is more correct than "who hath sent him" (the messenger).

to reproach the living God]—as in v. 4.

Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,
 19 and have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no
 gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: there-
 20 fore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD
 our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of
 the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only.
 21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying,
 Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast
 22 prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: *this is*
 the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him;

18. *all the nations, and their countries*] R.V., following the received text, has "all the countries (lit., lands) and their land." But the true reading is preserved in the corresponding verse of 2 Kings, which A.V. has rightly followed here.

have laid waste] This verb is never used of nations, except in ch. lx.
 12. It differs by a single letter from "laid under the ban" in v. 11, and ought probably to be altered accordingly.

19. *the work of men's hands*] Cf. ch. ii. 20, xvii. 8, xxxi. 7.

wood and stone] Deut. iv. 28, xxviii. 36, 64, xxix. 17; Ez. xx. 32.

20. Therefore let Jehovah shew, in this crisis of religion, that He alone possesses true Godhead.

that thou art the LORD, even thou only] Lit. "that thou art Jehovah alone," cf. Deut. vi. 4. But the easier, and perhaps the original, reading is given by 2 Kings "that thou Jehovah art God alone" (see v. 16).

21—35. The answer to the prayer comes in the form of a message from Isaiah. The message as here given really consists of two distinct oracles: (1) a poem, on the pride and the approaching humiliation of Sennacherib (vv. 22—29); to which is appended a short passage in a different rhythm addressed to Hezekiah (vv. 30—32); (2) a definite prediction, in a less elevated style, of the deliverance of Jerusalem (vv. 33—35). The lyrical passage (vv. 22—32) appears to have been inserted in the narrative from some independent source. Although probably a genuine work of Isaiah, the recitation of a somewhat elaborate poem is hardly a natural form for a prophetic communication to take at so critical a juncture. A terse and pregnant oracle, such as we have in vv. 33—35 suits the situation better, and since these verses contain a complete and direct answer to the prayer of Hezekiah, we need not hesitate to regard them as the actual message of the prophet on this occasion. A slight indication of the original connexion of the narrative may possibly be found in the "therefore" of v. 33, referring back to the "whereas" of v. 21.

21. The construction of the verse is entirely altered in 2 Ki. xix. 20 by the introduction of the words "I have heard." It then reads "That which thou hast prayed...I have heard." But the addition is unnecessary; and the text in Isaiah is to be preferred.

22—29. The poem on Sennacherib is in substance a Taunt-song;

The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, *and*
laughed thee to scorn;

The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at
thee.

Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? 23

And against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice,

And lifted up thine eyes on high?

Even against the Holy One of Israel.

By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and 24
hast said,

By the multitude of my chariots am I come up

To the height of the mountains, *to* the sides of Lebanon;

And I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, *and* the
choice fir trees thereof:

And I will enter *into* the height of his border, *and* the
forest of his Carmel.

but in form an elegy, written in the measure characteristic of the *qînāh*.
The first two lines (v. 22) read:

**She hath despised thee, hath mocked thee—the virgin daughter of
Zion;**

Behind thee hath shaken the head—the daughter of Jerusalem.

The prophet anticipates the ignominious retreat of the Assyrian king
("behind thee"), leaving Jerusalem still a "virgin" fortress. To
"shake the head" is in the O.T. a gesture of contempt (Ps. xxii. 7;
Jer. xviii. 16; Lam. ii. 15, &c.).

23. "What sort of being is He whom thou hast defied?" The first
two sentences are rhetorical questions, and require no answer. The
last sentence is to be read as an affirmation: **Yea, thou hast lifted up
thine eyes to the height against the Holy One of Israel.** To "lift up
the voice" means here to speak proudly, not as often to cry aloud (e.g.
ch. xiii. 2).

24, 25. The king of Assyria is represented as boasting of the ease
with which he triumphs over all natural obstacles in the pursuance of
his plans; such language is blasphemy against Jehovah, the Lord of
Nature; although the king himself may be hardly conscious of the sin
he is committing. The tenses in the speech might all be made perfects
by a change of vowels, or they may all be rendered by presents; the
king's meaning being simply that he constantly performs such im-
possibilities as these. The Assyrian parallels cited by Cheyne are very
striking (see his *Commentary*, p. 219 and the references there).

24. For *servants* 2 Kings has "messengers," as in vv. 9, 14.

am I come up] Better, **I go up**. The "I" is emphatic.

the sides of Lebanon means its **recesses** (R.V. "innermost parts").

the height of his border] Render, **its furthest height**; or (changing

- 25 I have digged, and drunk water;
And with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the
rivers of the besieged *places*.
- 26 Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it;
And of ancient times, that I have formed it?
Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be
to lay waste
Defenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.
- 27 Therefore their inhabitants *were* of small power,
They were dismayed and confounded:
They were *as* the grass of the field, and *as* the green
herb,
As the grass on the housetops, and *as* corn blasted
before it be grown up.

the text in accordance with 2 Ki. xix. 23) **its last retreat** (lit. "lodging-place").

the forest of his Carmel] R.V. **the forest of his fruitful field** (see ch. x. 18, xxix. 17, xxxii. 15 f.)—perhaps the cedar groves on the highest ridges.

25. *I have digged...water*] I (again emphatic) **dig and drink foreign waters**. The word "foreign" is to be supplied from 2 Ki. xix. 24. For the expression cf. Prov. ix. 17, v. 15.

all the rivers of the besieged places] Render with R.V. **all the rivers** (lit. "Nile-streams") **of Egypt**. See on ch. xix. 6. The extravagant hyperbole covers an empty boast; no Assyrian army had ever yet set foot in Egypt, and Sennacherib was not destined to see his dream fulfilled.

26, 27. In all his successes the Assyrian has been but the unconscious instrument of Jehovah's eternal purpose. Cf. ch. x. 5—15.

26. The verse reads, with a slight change of pointing: **Hast thou not heard? Long ago have I made it, from the days of old have I formed it: now I bring it to pass, and so hast thou been (able) to lay waste in ruined heaps defenced cities**. Cf. ch. xxii. 11, xlv. 7, xlv. 11.

27. *Therefore their inhabitants...confounded*] Better, **And their inhabitants (being) of small power** (lit. "short of hand") **were terrified and ashamed**.

grass on the housetops] See Ps. cxxix. 6—8.

corn blasted before it be grown up] The Hebr. text reads "a corn-field before it is in stalk" (see R.V.). The A.V. adopts the reading of 2 Ki. xix. 26, which is perhaps to be preferred—"a blasting before it is in stalk." But neither rendering accounts quite satisfactorily for the words "before it is in stalk." In all probability they are, as Wellhausen has suggested, a corruption of the opening words of the next verse, which is obviously unsymmetrical as it stands.

But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy ²⁸
coming in,

And thy rage against me.

Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come ²⁹
up into mine ears,

Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle
in thy lips,

And I will turn thee back by the way by which thou
camest.

And this *shall be* a sign unto thee,

Ye shall eat *this* year such as groweth of itself;

And the second year that which springeth of the same:

28, 29. All the acts of the Assyrian are under the strict surveillance of Jehovah, who will shew His power over him by dragging him back, like a wild beast, to his place. If the emendation of Wellhausen (see on v. 27) be accepted, v. 28 would read: **Before me is thy rising up and thy sitting down** (cf. Ps. cxxxix. 2), and **thy going out and thy coming in I know, and thy raging against me.**

29. For *tumult* render with R.V. marg. **careless ease.** "Raging" and "careless ease" form a contrast, like "rising up" and "sitting down" in the previous verse.

therefore will I put my hook in thy nose] Cf. Ezek. xix. 4, xxix. 4, xxxviii. 4.

I will turn thee back...] See vv. 7 and 34.

30—32. A sign is given to Hezekiah of the fulfilment of the preceding prophecy. But beyond the brief period of hardship which must follow the invasion, the prophet announces the advent of a new age in which all his hopes for the future of Israel shall be realised.

30. The "sign" of this verse is of the same nature as that of Ex. iii. 12, and ch. vii. 14. It consists of a series of events, in themselves natural, which will attest the fact that all the circumstances of the deliverance had been foreordained by Jehovah, and foretold by His prophet.

such as groweth of itself] Hebr. *šāphṭāh*, the scanty crop produced by the shaken grains of the last harvest (Lev. xxv. 5, 11).

that which springeth of the same] *shāhīš* or in 2 Kings *šāhtsh*, a word which does not occur elsewhere. It is explained to mean "that which springs from the roots" of the corn. The import of the sign at all events is that for two years the regular operations of agriculture will be suspended. It is uncertain how long a period of Assyrian occupation is thus contemplated. The year runs from October to October; and *this year* must apparently mean the year *after* that in which the crops were destroyed by the invader; for in that year there could hardly be even *šāphṭāh* to eat. We may suppose that the prophecy was spoken in the beginning of the year, i.e. in the autumn of 701, before the usual season of ploughing. The question then arises, How long would the

- And in the third year sow ye, and reap,
 And plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.
 31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah
 Shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.
 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant,
 And they that escape out of mount Zion:
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.
 33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of
 Assyria,
 He shall not come into this city,
 Nor shoot an arrow there,
 Nor come before it *with* shields,
 Nor cast a bank against it.
 34 By the way that he came, *by the same* shall he return,
 And shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.
 35 For I will defend this city to save it
 For mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

Assyrians require to remain in the land in order to destroy the prospects of two successive harvests? Wetzstein states that at the present day, unless the ground has been several times broken up in the previous summer the seed will be lost in the ground. If therefore the Assyrian occupation lasted into the summer of 700, it would interfere with the necessary preparations for a crop in the following year, the year of the *shāhîs*. But even this limited period can hardly be reconciled with the actual result as recorded in v. 36. Probably therefore the sign does not fix the term of the Assyrian occupation, but refers to wider effects of the invasion, the depopulation of the country, the destruction of homesteads, &c., which rendered an immediate resumption of agricultural activity impossible.

31. Comp. ch. xxvii. 6.

32. *the zeal of the LORD...this*] From ch. ix. 7.

33-35. An assurance that Jehovah will protect Jerusalem, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer.

33. *Therefore* probably attaches itself to "whereas" in v. 21 (see the note on that verse).

34. Cf. vv. 7 and 29.

35. *I will defend this city*] Cf. ch. xxxi. 5, where the same verb is used.

for my servant David's sake] An expression of frequent occurrence in the books of Kings. See 1 Ki. xi. 13, 34; xv. 4; 2 Ki. viii. 19.

36. The miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's host. It is certainly remarkable that none of Isaiah's prophecies delivered at the time predict this appalling disaster, the clearest anticipation of it being in ch. xvii. 12-14, an oracle delivered some time before. At the same time some such occurrence is needed to account for Sennacherib's precipitate

Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in ³⁶ the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king ³⁷ of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping ³⁸ in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they

retreat before Tirhakah. A confirmation of the main fact is also found in the Egyptian tradition, according to which Sennacherib had already reached Pelusium in Egypt, when in a single night his army was rendered helpless by a plague of field-mice which gnawed the bows of the soldiers and the thongs of their shields (Herodotus, II. 141). Since the mouse was among the Egyptians a symbol of pestilence we may infer that the basis of truth in the legend was a deadly epidemic in the Assyrian camp; and this is the form of calamity which is naturally suggested by the terms of the biblical narrative. The scene of the disaster is not indicated in the O.T. record, and there is no obstacle to the supposition that it took place, as in the Egyptian legend, in the plague-haunted marshes of Pelusium. The silence of Sennacherib about his misfortune is quite intelligible.

the angel of the LORD] is associated with the plague in 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16.

37, 38. The flight of Sennacherib, and his death at Nineveh. If the passage be a combination of two parallel narratives, the second ends with v. 36, while vv. 37 and 38 form the conclusion of the first. In the Hebrew, the first words of v. 37 would be the correct continuation of "and when he heard it" in v. 9.

38. The official account of Sennacherib's death as given in the Babylonian Chronicle (Col. iii. 34—38) is as follows: "On 20 Tebet Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was killed by his son in a revolt. [23] years reigned Sennacherib in Assyria. From 20 Tebet to 2 Adar the revolt was maintained in Assyria. On 18 Sivan Esarhaddon, his son, ascended the throne in Assyria." (Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, II. pp. 281 ff.) (The event took place in 681, twenty years after Sennacherib's disappearance from Palestine. During these years he claims to have conducted five successful campaigns; but he never found another opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Palestine, and the very fact that he lived so long may have been forgotten in Judah before this history was written.

Nisroch his god] No Assyrian deity of this name has as yet been found on the monuments.

Adrammelech and Sharezer] Both Assyrian names. The former is named as the parricide by profane historians (although not in the inscriptions); the latter only here. The motive for the crime is explained by the statement of Polyhistor, that Sennacherib had placed Esarhaddon

escaped *into* the land of Armenia : and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

- 38 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in
2 order : for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,
3 and said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that* which *is* good in thy sight. And
4 Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to
5 Isaiah, saying, Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the

on the throne of Babylon during his own lifetime, an act which would naturally excite the jealousy of his other sons (Budge, *History of Esarhaddon*, p. 2).

the land of Armenia] R.V. **Ararat**. *Ararat* is the Hebrew equivalent of the Assyr. *Urartu*, Armenia.

CH. XXXVIII. HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND RECOVERY.

1. *In those days*] The incident must have preceded by some months the embassy of Merodach-Baladan, the probable date of which will be considered in the Introduction to ch. xxxix. The order of the chapters cannot be chronological, and the vague expression "in those days" need not perhaps mean more than "in the time of Hezekiah." If, as Delitzsch and others have supposed, ch. xxxviii. f. stood before xxxvi. f. in the original document, the note of time would naturally refer to some other events in Isaiah's biography which had been previously narrated. The best justification of this hypothesis is the solution it furnishes of the chronological difficulties presented by this group of chapters. ~~It~~

Set thine house in order] Lit. "Give commandment to thy house," the last duty of a dying man (2 Sam. xvii. 23). An example of what is meant may be found in David's elaborate death-bed charge to Solomon (1 Ki. ii. 1—9).

2. *turned his face toward the wall*] (cf. 1 Ki. xxi. 4) an instinctive expression of the feeling that he was alone with God in this bitter moment.

3. *with a perfect heart*] Lit. "with a whole heart," one absolutely devoted to Jehovah. Cf. 1 Ki. viii. 61, xi. 4, xv. 3, 14, where the expression occurs with the addition of the words "with Jehovah." The motive of this prayer is clearly expressed in the Song of Thanksgiving which follows (see vv. 11, 18, 19).

4. In 2 Ki. xx. 4 we read that "afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court," this message came to him. So quickly was the king's prayer answered. A somewhat similar instance of the revocation of one prophetic communication by another is that of Nathan in the matter of the building of the Temple (2 Sam. vii. 3, 4 ff.).

LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which

5. The verse is greatly abbreviated from 2 Ki. xx. 5. After *Hezekiah* the words "the captain of my people" are omitted; and also the sentence "I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord," which follows the word *behold*. It cannot be doubted that the historical book here preserves the original text.

the God of David thy father] for whose sake this special mercy is vouchsafed to the king (cf. ch. xxxvii. 35; 2 Ki. xx. 6).

fifteen years] That the number was arrived at by calculation on the part of the historian is not to be believed. If there be calculation in the case at all, it is in the date of ch. xxxvi. 1, which may very possibly be an inference from this prediction combined with the statement of 2 Ki. xviii. 2. (See on ch. xxxvi. 1.) In any case the assumption that the prophecy was exactly fulfilled is a legitimate one, and the fourteenth year of Hezekiah must be accepted as the true date of this sickness. The only question is whether the writer of ch. xxxvi. 1 may not have fallen into error by supposing that the date of Hezekiah's sickness fixed the time of Sennacherib's invasion. On that point see the Chronological Note, pp. lxxvi f. Since the king began to reign in his twenty-fifth year, it is after all not a long life that is here promised to him. His reign was to be doubled.

6. This is the only verse which would lead us to suppose that the events synchronised with Sennacherib's invasion; but its genuineness is doubtful. An unqualified assurance of deliverance is hardly consistent with the prophet's attitude to the king's policy at the time supposed. Hezekiah was deeply committed to projects of rebellion in the first years of Sennacherib's reign, and a political message from Isaiah in those circumstances could hardly fail to be accompanied by a warning against the tendency which prevailed at the court. Since the verse breaks the connexion between vv. 5 and 7, and since the latter part is a reproduction (in 2 Kings an exact reproduction) of ch. xxxvii. 35, there are some grounds for supposing that it has been inserted by the compiler of the books of Kings.

7, 8. After v. 6, 2 Kings describes the prophet's prescription for the malady (see on v. 21). The account of the sign also is given in a much fuller form there. It was granted at the express request of the king (see v. 22), who had not his father's fear of "tempting the Lord" (ch. vii. 12). Allowed to choose between a "going forward" and a "going backward" of the shadow, he decided for the latter as not so "light" a thing (i.e. less conceivable); when, at Isaiah's intercession, the desired thing happened.

is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

- 9 The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

8. The R.V. has (after *Ahaz*) the phrase "with the sun," which is wrongly taken by the A.V. as an adjunct of the word "dial" (*the sun dial*). It is necessary, however, to strike out the preposition "with" (as in the LXX.). The whole verse then reads literally: **Behold I will turn the shadow of the steps which the sun has gone down on the steps of Ahaz backward ten steps; and the sun turned back ten steps on the steps which it had gone down.** We must suppose that the "steps," whatever they were, could be seen from the sick-chamber of Hezekiah, to whose mind the sign had an obvious symbolical significance. The retreating shadow, miraculously lengthening the day, was a pledge of the postponement of that "night in which no man can work" which had almost overtaken him. What kind of apparatus is denoted by the "steps of Ahaz" we have no means of determining. It is not clear, indeed, that a regularly constructed sun-dial of any kind is meant: a shadow falling on some flight of steps in the palace-court, and affording a rough and ready measure of time, would sufficiently explain the terms used.

9—20. Hezekiah's thanksgiving for his recovery. This poem, which is not given in the parallel narrative in 2 Kings, must have been inserted here from an independent source. An external mark of the insertion is found in the displacement of vv. 21, 22 from their proper context. The superscription (v. 9) resembles several of those in the book of Psalms, and was no doubt found in the document from which the poem was transcribed. (The song, therefore, was in all probability traditionally ascribed to Hezekiah, but whether this judgment rests on historical authority, or merely on its inherent suitability to his circumstances, it is impossible to say.) The linguistic evidence seems to point to a late date. The poem, like many of the Psalms, is a record of individual experience, but adapted for use in the Temple worship (v. 20). The experience is that of a man who has been brought face to face with death, who has prayed for life, and has been "heard in that he feared"; but with the reticence which characterises the Psalmists all details of merely personal interest are suppressed with a view to the liturgical use of the poem.

The psalm may be divided into two parts (both indicated in the superscription, v. 9):—

- i. vv. 10—14. A description of the writer's anguish and despair in the near prospect of death.
- ii. vv. 15—20. His joy and gratitude when assured of his recovery.

9. *The writing of Hezekiah*] According to some commentators we should read "A Michtam of Hezekiah" (changing a letter in the Hebr.).

I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the 10
gates of the grave :

I am deprived of the residue of my years.

I said, I shall not see the LORD, *even* the LORD, in the 11
land of the living :

I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of
the world.

Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a 12
shepherd's tent :

I have cut off like a weaver my life : he will cut me
off with pining sickness :

The word *Michtam* occurs in the titles of Pss. xvi., lvi.—lx.; but is of uncertain derivation and meaning.

10. *in the cutting off of my days*] R.V. **In the noontide of my days** (lit. "in the stillness of my days"). The phrase has been variously interpreted; but the best sense is that given by the R.V., whether the noon be conceived as the time of rest, or (as in an Arabic idiom) the time when the sun seems to stand still in the heavens. Hezekiah was at the time in his thirty-ninth year. (Cf. "in the midst of my days," Ps. cii. 24.)

the gates of the grave (lit. of Sheol)] Cf. Job xxxviii. 17; Ps. ix. 13, cvii. 18.

I am deprived (lit. "punished") *of the residue of my years*] The verb for "be punished" does not elsewhere bear the sense of "be mulcted" as it must do in this translation. Duhm, with a different division of the verse, renders as follows:—

"I said, In the noon-tide of my days I must depart;

I am consigned (cf. Jer. xxxvii. 21) to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years."

11. Death is the end of all communion both with God and men. To *see the LORD* is to enjoy the sense of His presence in the appointed acts of worship (see on ch. i. 12). The thought that Sheol afforded no such opportunities of converse with the living God was that which made death a terror to O.T. believers (cf. v. 18; Ps. lxxxviii. 5, &c.).

the inhabitants of the world] The received text has "the inhabitants of cessation" (*hedef*), i.e. "of the place where life ceases," an expression for the underworld. The reading *heled* ("the world") is found in some Heb. MSS.; and is rightly preferred by A.V.

12. Figures setting forth the utter frustration of his hope of life. The first is that of a nomad's tent, easily pitched and soon removed.

Mine age is departed] Render: **My habitation is plucked up** (Cheyne). The sense "habitation" is Aramaic and Arabic, and does not occur again in the Bible (but see on ch. liii. 8). Elsewhere the word means "generation," in the sense of "contemporaries," which is obviously unsuitable here. Then follow two figures from weaving.

I have cut off] Rather: **I have rolled up** (R.V.) as the weaver does

- From day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.
 13 I reckoned till morning, *that*, as a lion, so will he break
 all my bones :—
 From day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.
 14 Like a crane *or* a swallow, so did I chatter :
 I did mourn as a dove :
 Mine eyes fail *with looking* upward :
 O LORD, I am oppressed ; undertake for me.
 15 What shall I say ? he hath both spoken unto me, and
 himself hath done *it* :—
 I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my
 soul.

the finished web. *with pining sickness*] should be (as in R.V. marg.)
from the thrum, the threads by which the web is attached to the
 loom.

from day even to night] i.e. apparently “within twenty-four hours.”

13. *I reckoned till morning*] R.V. has “I quieted myself until
 morning.” It is better to amend the text slightly and read **I cried until
 morning**.

so will he break (better, **he breaketh**) *all my bones*] the crushing effect
 of pain. Cf. Lam. iii. 4.

14. *Like a crane or a swallow*] Rather, as R.V., **Like a swallow or
 a crane**. Both words occur again only in Jer. viii. 7. The want of a
 copula in Heb., and the unsuitability of the verb “chirp” (E.V.
 “chatter”) to the note of the crane suggests that the latter may have
 been imported into the text from the passage in Jeremiah. It is wanting
 in the LXX.

I did mourn as a dove] Cf. ch. lix. 11 ; Ezek. vii. 16 ; Nah. ii. 7.

with looking upward] lit. **toward the height**, where Jehovah dwells.

undertake for me] **become surety for me** (Job xvii. 3). The image is
 that of a debtor who is being committed to prison.

15, 16. Two extremely difficult verses. As commonly explained,
 v. 15 introduces the second half of the song with an exclamation of
 amazement at the wonderful deliverance experienced. Literally it reads :

“What shall I say ? And He said to me—and *He* (emphatic) did it ;
 I shall walk with leisurely pace all my years—because of the
 bitterness of my soul.”

The words *he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done* it would
 refer to the promise of recovery through the prophet, and the fulfilment
 of it. This whole conception of the verse is vigorously criticised by
 Duhm, who renders thus :—

“What shall I speak and say to Him—since *He* has done it ?

I toss to and fro all my sleeping time—because of the bitterness
 of my soul.”

The Hebr. word rendered “toss to and fro” is found again only in
 Ps. xlii. 4, where it means “to walk in festal procession.” Duhm in

O Lord, by these *things* men live, 16
 And in all these *things* is the life of my spirit:
 So wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.
 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: 17
 But thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the
 pit of corruption:
 For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.
 For the grave cannot praise thee, death can *not* cele- 18
 brate thee:
 They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy
 truth.
 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do this* 19
 day:

this passage is disposed to connect it with a noun found in Job vii. 4 ("tossings to and fro").

16. The thought expressed by E.V. is somewhat as follows: "By such Divine words and deeds (v. 15) men are preserved in life; and by such things my spirit is revived." No one will say that this is either good Hebrew or a natural sense; and the text is almost certainly corrupt. The verb "live" closely resembles an Aramaic verb (*ḥivvāh* occurring several times in the O.T.) meaning "to declare"; and this was evidently read by LXX.: *περι αὐτῆς γὰρ ἀνηγγέλη σοι*. Starting with this, Duhm makes the verse read:

"Lord, of this doth my heart make mention to Thee,
 Give rest to my spirit and recover me, &c."

His emendations however are somewhat sweeping.

so wilt thou...live] The first verb is impf. (fut.), the second imperat. *recover me* is literally "give me health."

17. *Behold, for peace...bitterness*] (lit. "it was bitter to me, bitter"), i.e. the bitterness of affliction was mercifully overruled so as to yield "peaceable fruit" through his recovery (cf. Heb. xii. 11).

but thou hast in love...pit] Lit. (according to the Hebrew text) "and thou hast loved my soul out of the pit..."—a pregnant construction of perhaps unexampled boldness. The true reading probably is "thou hast kept back my soul, &c." (*ḥāsaktā* for *ḥāshaqtā*).

For pit of corruption render **pit of annihilation**.
cast...behind thy back] An image for utter forgetfulness: 1 Ki. xiv. 9; Neh. ix. 26; Ps. l. 17. The Psalmist recognises in his deliverance the pledge that his sins are forgiven and forgotten.

18, 19. The deepest motive for the saint's gratitude is that only on earth can he know the joys of fellowship with God.

18. With the thought of this verse comp. Ps. vi. 5, xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 10—12, cxv. 17.

the grave] Sheol.

The father to the children shall make known thy truth.

20 The LORD *was ready* to save me:

Therefore we will sing my songs *to* the stringed instruments

All the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

21 For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.

22 Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the sign that I shall go up *to* the house of the LORD?

19. *the father...truth*] Cf. Ps. xxii. 30, xlviii. 13, 14, lxxi. 18, lxxviii. 3, 4.

20. Perhaps a liturgical appendix, adapting the psalm for congregational use. Hence the transition from 1st pers. sing. to 1st pers. plu.

we will sing...instruments] Rather, **we will play with string music** ("we" including the Levites or the congregation). The word for "string music" is *Nēgînôth*, which occurs frequently in the headings of the Psalms. Here and in Hab. iii. 9 it has the suffix of 1st pers. sing. ("my"), which it is very difficult to explain.

21, 22. Cf. 2 Ki. xx. 7, 8. The verses are obviously out of their true places here. The pluperfects in the English Translation are ungrammatical (Driver, *Tenses*, pp. 84 ff.), and we must render **And Isaiah said...And Hezekiah said.**

21. *lay it for a plaister*] Lit. **rub it.** *Lump* should be **cake**, as in R.V. Many commentators suppose that the malady from which Hezekiah suffered was the plague; and Gesenius explains that the appearance of the "boil" would be a hopeful, though not a certain, symptom of recovery. He adds that the application of figs is resorted to by modern Arabian and Turkish physicians in cases of pestilence.

V CH. XXXIX. THE EMBASSY OF MERODACH-BALADAN.

Merodach-Baladan (in Babylonian *Marduk-habal-iddina*) was king of Babylon for twelve years (721—709) in the reign of Sargon, and again for six months (*circa* 704) in the reign of Sennacherib. He was originally the Chaldean ruler of Bit-Yakin, a small state in southern Babylonia; and his long and finally unsuccessful struggle for the throne of Babylon is interesting as foreshadowing the future ascendancy of the Chaldeans in the dynasty of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. That he was able so long to hold his own against a powerful monarch like Sargon was largely due to his practice of forming alliances with the enemies or disaffected subjects of the Assyrian Empire, a policy of which this chapter furnishes an illustration. Since his final overthrow by Sennacherib took place before the latter's invasion of Palestine, it is quite certain that ch. xxxix. (and consequently xxxviii.) is to be dated before ch. xxxvi. f. There is, however, a difference of opinion as to whether this embassy belongs to the earlier and longer period of his reign or to the brief interval of power at the beginning of Sennacherib's reign. The vague date "in those days" at the beginning of ch. xxxviii.

At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king 39 of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. And 2 Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices,

seems of course to favour the latter view. On the other hand it might be urged that six months was barely long enough for the tidings of Hezekiah's recovery to reach Babylon and for the messengers to reach Palestine. But the question is really not to be settled from internal evidence; and the chief reason for deciding for the earlier period is that it appears to afford the best solution possible of the chronological difficulties connected with the reign of Hezekiah. We shall assume therefore that this incident actually occurred in or soon after the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (i.e. about 714). This was the period preceding Sargon's chastisement of Philistia (see on ch. xx.), when, as he himself informs us, Judah along with the neighbouring states, while "bringing presents to Asshur my lord" was "speaking treason." That Judah was spared on this occasion must have been due to a timely submission on the part of Hezekiah. And indeed the narrative before us produces the impression that while the king was greatly flattered by the attention shewn to him, he yet did not commit himself to a formal treaty, but left himself free to be guided by the development of events. It follows of course from this view that the events of ch. xxxviii. f. have no connexion with those of ch. xxxvi. f. and that the date of ch. xxxvi. is wrongly placed.

1. *Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan*] The form "Berodach" in 2 Ki. xx. 12 is less correct. Marduk-habal-iddina is described in the monuments as "son of Yakin"; but this is no reason for doubting the identity of the person. The latter is probably his dynastic title.

letters] a letter, as ch. xxxvii. 14. LXX. adds *καὶ πρέσβεις*, i.e. "ambassadors," whose presence is assumed in the next verse.

for he had heard] So in 2 Ki. xx. 12 correctly. The text here reads strictly "and he heard." The motive here specified was merely a pretext to veil the real political object of the mission. This appears clearly enough in what follows. According to 2 Chron. xxxii. 31 the embassy was prompted by scientific curiosity with regard to the miracle of the sun-dial.

2. *And Hezekiah was glad of them*] Not only was his vanity flattered, but the arrival of the envoys fell in with political projects to which he was even then too ready to lend his ear. The reading is decidedly preferable to the flat and meaningless "heard of them" in 2 Ki. xx. 13 (not LXX.).

the house of his precious things] R.V. marg. has "house of his spicery," identifying the word with one found in Gen. xxxvii. 25, xliii. 11. But this rendering has only an apparent justification in the "spices" mentioned below. The right meaning is given by the Targ. and Peshito: **treasure-house**. According to the younger Delitzsch it is the Assyrian *bit nakanti*. It is obvious that Hezekiah's treasury was still full, which

and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah
 3 shewed them not. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from
 4 Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that *is* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that
 5 I have not shewed them. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah,
 6 Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: Behold, the days

could not have been the case after the ruinous fine exacted by Sennacherib (2 Ki. xviii. 14,—16).

the spices, and the precious ointment] **the spices and the fine oil.** (Cf. 2 Chron. xxxii. 27.) These natural products of the land were probably stored for commerce and are mentioned as a source of wealth.

the house of his armour] better: **his armoury.** It is probably the same as the "house of the forest (of Lebanon)" in ch. xxii. 8.

3. The prophet's appearance on the scene shews that he suspected the king of coquetting with a foreign alliance, although it is remarkable that on neither side is there any explicit allusion to the political aspect of the affair. Perhaps the first evasive answer of Hezekiah betrays a consciousness of wrong-doing.

from a far country] He answers that part of the question which involved least embarrassment. It is hardly likely that he means to hint that an alliance with so distant a country was out of the question; more probably he will excuse himself on the ground of hospitality to strangers who had come so far. It is noticeable that he does not mention the ostensible motive of the embassy.

5. *Hear the word of the LORD*] Isaiah's tone is threatening, because he sees in this thing a sin against Jehovah. It was not necessary to specify wherein the offence consisted; king and prophet understood each other perfectly. The reception of an embassy from the sworn enemy of the king of Assyria was in itself an act of rebellion likely to precipitate a conflict which Isaiah strove to avert; and the childish vanity displayed by Hezekiah, his pride in earthly resources, and his readiness to enter into friendly relations with the powers of this world, were tendencies against which Isaiah's ministry had been a continuous protest. All these tendencies sprang from a single root, the lack of that absolute faith in Jehovah as the all-sufficient guide and protector of the nation which was the fundamental article of Isaiah's political programme.

6, 7. This is the only occasion on which a prophecy of the Babylonian Exile appears to be attributed to Isaiah. It is not easy to reconcile such a prediction with the particular circumstances in which it is

come, that all that *is* in thine house, and *that* which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of 7 thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah to 8 Isaiah, Good *is* the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

reported to have been uttered. The announcement naturally left on Hezekiah's mind the impression that his own days would be spent in peace, whereas in reality the most critical juncture of his reign still lay before him, and it is hardly credible that Isaiah should have disclosed to him the remote fate of his descendants, without warning him of the more immediate and personal consequences of his folly. This difficulty would be removed if we could hold that the prophecy was uttered *after* the deliverance from Sennacherib; but we have seen that this supposition is inadmissible on historical grounds. A more serious consideration is that Isaiah's Messianic ideal leaves no room for a transference of the world-power from Assyria to Babylon, or the substitution of the latter for the former as the instrument of Israel's chastisement. He uniformly regards the intervention of Jehovah in the Assyrian crisis as the supreme moment of human history and the turning point in the destinies of the kingdom of God, to be succeeded immediately by the glories of the Messianic age. The prediction, moreover, is without a parallel in the prophetic literature of Isaiah's age (in Mic. iv. 10 the clause "and thou shalt go to Babylon" is inconsistent with the context, and in all probability a gloss). These objections are partly neutralised by the hypothesis that some nearer and more limited judgment is referred to, such as the imprisonment of Manasseh in Babylon (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11) in the reign of Assurbanipal. The terms of the prophecy fall short of a deportation of the people and a destruction of the city, only the fate of the treasures and the royal family being indicated. No great stress, however, can be laid on this limitation (comp. a somewhat similar case in Am. vii. 17) and the suggestion fails to harmonise the prediction with Isaiah's known anticipation of the course of events. It is possible that the prophet's actual communication had reached the late writer of this narrative in a form coloured by subsequent events.

7. The words *which thou shalt beget* seem, according to usage, to imply that the calamity would fall on Hezekiah's own children.

8. *Good is the word of the LORD*] An expression of pious resignation, including repentance; cf. 1 Sam. iii. 18.

there shall be peace and truth (or steadfastness) in my days] In the Old Testament the postponement of a calamity is always regarded as a mitigation of its severity; see 1 Ki. xxi. 28 f.; 2 Ki. xxii. 18 ff. Hezekiah's words probably mean no more than that mercy is mingled with judgment in the sentence pronounced on him.

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